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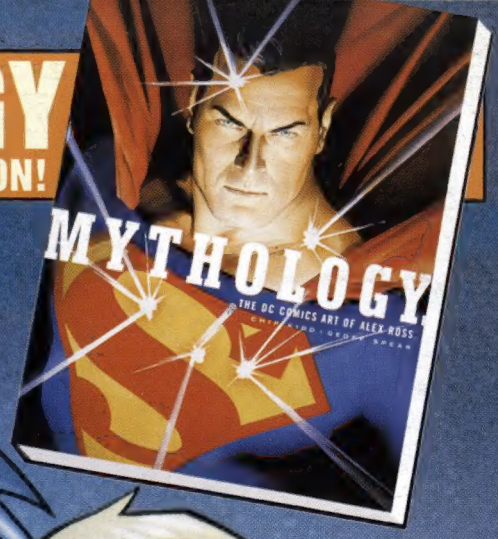

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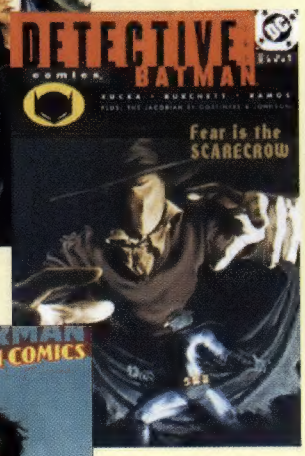

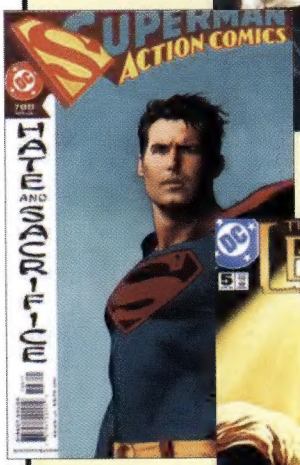

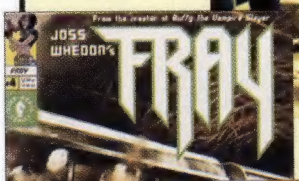

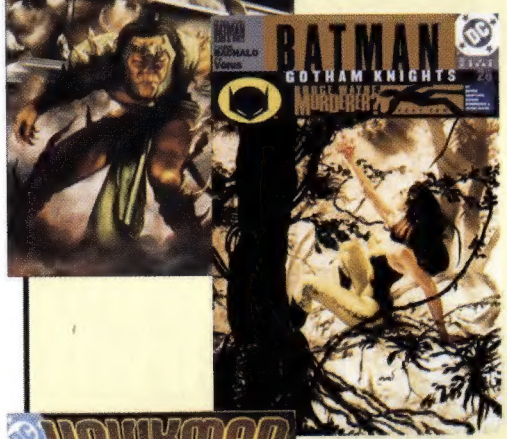

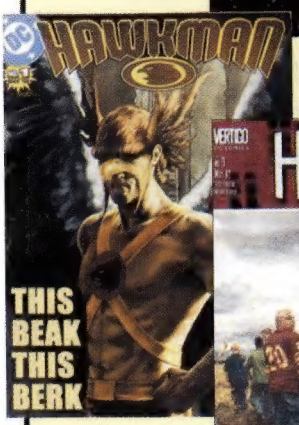

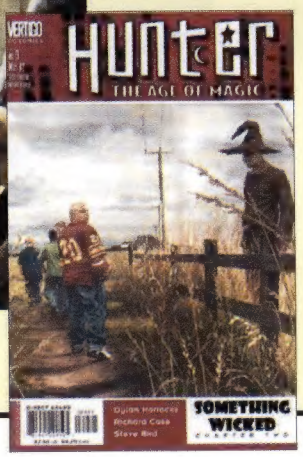

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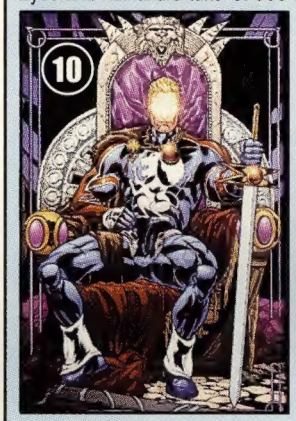
#170 APRIL 2004

Inside this issue

COVER: It's fast becoming a regular event, the overhauling of Marvel's top-selling family of titles. This year not only brings with it a host of new heavy-hitter writers and artists for the existing X-books, but also the rebirth of Captain Britain in Claremont and Davis's **Uncanny X-Men**, **Excalibur** unsheathed once more, Young Mutants mark IV in **Academy X** and Bishop pounding a precinct beat in **District X**. Details on pages 5, 6 and 14

News

NEWS INTERNATIONAL: Micro Transformers make comicbook debut... Snake-Eyes and Kamakura take **GI Joe** spotlight... Gothic horror comes to CrossGen...



Bio-war brings bounty hunter to Image... Vaughn Bodé's Wizard in Oz... US indie to offer Spanish comics... More manga from TokyoPop... Image releases **Freak**... Titan offers nostalgic threesome... **The Plot** next for **Spirit** creator... Volgan invasion continues at **2000 AD**... Larsen replaces Valentino at Image... Book deal for **American Splendor** creator... Moonstone resurrects another 1930s hero... plus much more **5**

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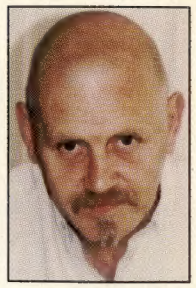
Sez Dez



Editorial
Dez Skinn

I'VE LONG had a soft spot for John Lennon's *Lost Weekend* fellow carouser and chanteur Harry Nilsson, he of such ballads as *Without You* and such lunacy as *I Sang My Balls off for You, Baby*.

One of his more obscure ditties, *Mr Richland's Favorite Song,* has lyrics frighteningly apposite for our industry. It tells the rise and fall of a rock singer, how his fans all looked the same at the peak of his career and would have to go home early to their parents. By the end of the song, the calender's changed and his fans have all grown up and married. By now he's performing for them in a local bar. It ends with the line, "And now the time has come, the walrus says, to call your fans by name".

OK, so things aren't quite that bad for comics. But, remembering those halcyon days of bulging mail sacks, I must confess being unnerved when I look through the post and can too often name readers who have written in, simply by looking at the handwriting on the envelopes.

Then there's the flip side, where readers take for granted you remember them as they had talked to you for five minutes at a convention bar three years ago.

One thing seasoned pros are good at is making you believe they do remember you, and precisely what you said to them. One senior citizen of our chosen profession even pretends to take notes "Hey, that's a great idea," when trapped. Me, I quit that game years ago, about the time I was caught out and had to fess up at least six minutes into an incoming phone call that I'd felt too embarrassed to admit earlier but I didn't actually know who the "Dave" was that I'd been listening to for over 360 seconds.

So now, whenever I'm in such a situation, I own up straight away with an interjected "Sorry, I can't recall where I know you from." Of course, this in turn can create ribald laughter and great derision, such as the time I quoth such at a launch do and the answer came back, "Bloody hell, Dez. It's me… Garth. Garth Ennis."

But when you get a submission through the post, with no return address, from somebody who appears to know you well and expects a reply, you're totally stuffed. There is no suitable reposte thrust. Yep, on top of all the "Hi Dez, it's John" phone calls, I had such a missive mailed in last week. No hi, hello or welcome intro, simply an "OK, I'll give it a go, Desmond" followed by no less than a nine-page densely typed sample of something, I'm still uncertain what, and a closing line of "I'll need a while to piece together the other parts if you want to use them." Use them where? For what? Why is nothing being explained?

And who is this Desmond bloke anyway?

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Buffy creator spearheads latest X-titles overhaul

X-MEN: Reload *brings changes to almost all of Marvel's X-Men titles. The overhaul begins in May with* ***Weapon X*** *#123 [cover art by Andy Parks above] and* ***Exiles*** *#46 [cover art by Mizuki Sakakibara, below] among the issues first implementing the new directions.*

X-Men: Reload event offers up new monthly mutant titles plus revamps, relaunches and revisions a'plenty

THE BEST kept secret in comics about Joss Whedon and John Cassaday taking over **New X-Men** is that they are to do so a full 12 months before rumour mongers said they would.

Another surprise is that the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* creator/writer and the **Planetary** artist are not helming up the series previously written by Grant Morrison. Instead they are getting the opportunity to launch their very own title.

Mutant Academy

The Whedon and Cassaday comic is titled **Astonishing X-Men** but the **New X-Men** label is not being discarded. Instead it is being handed over to **New Mutants** co-writers Nunzio DeFilippis and Christina Weir as another aspect of *Reload*, a company-wide restructuring of the X-Men line taking effect in May.

Together with new series penciller Randy Green, they are revamping it as **New X-Men: Academy X**. Following the cancellation of **New Mutants**, this marks a new beginning for their teen team, which is now being trained by Emma Frost and Cyclops who prove to be much tougher tutors than Professor X ever was.

Also cancelled is the clumsily titled **X-Treme X-Men.** This frees up series artist Salvador Larroca to join ex-**Uncanny X-Men** writer Chuck Austen on **X-Men** from #157.

In addition, **X-Treme X-Men** scribe Chris Claremont is released not only to launch **Excalibur** as a replacement series but also to reunite with his **Excalibur** co-creator, artist Alan Davis, as they return to **Uncanny X-Men** *[further details on page 14].*

A third title premiering in May is **District X** *[see page 6 for further details].*

Also as part of *Reload*, **Exiles** is getting a new creative team *[see below]* as is **Mystique** – with writer Sean McKeever and penciller Manuel Garcia coming on board with #14 – while **Weapon X** gets a new artist in Tom Mandrake as well as a new focus.

Marvel Handbook

Rounding out *Reload* is **The Official Handbook of the Marvel Universe: X-Men 2004**. A 48-pager, the $3.99 one-shot features full character dossiers, which are to include biographies, powers and histories. "We'll have that for a lot of the core team members as well as a lot of the concept work for the whole *Reload* event," explained editor Mike Marts.

Writer takes Route 666 to Marvel Exiles

TONY Bedard is the latest creator once exclusively contracted to CrossGen to find a home at Marvel.

As part of the *Reload* event *[see main story]* the **Route 666** writer is replacing Judd Winick on **Exiles**. As of #46, he forms one half of the new creative crew alongside series cover artist Mizuki Sakakibara, now also to draw interiors.

With its team of mutants leaping from one alternate reality to another, **Exiles** has much in common with Marvel's **What If...?** series, as Bedard, who also writes **Kiss Kiss Bang Bang** readily appreciates. "I can use any Marvel character I want, however I want them. Whichever version of a character was my favourite, I can put them in my **Exiles** stories, even if that version hasn't been 'in continuity' for years. Storm with the mohawk... Colossus with the dog-collar... Wolverine in the brown-and-tan... Galactus in shorts... Disco-suit Beyonder... You name it"

Timebroker mystery

Regarding his plans for **Exiles**, the writer said, "What I want to do is to begin giving more of an overarching direction and purpose to their various adventures, having them build toward something and giving the series a sense of progress.

"Without that, it might just degenerate into one **What If...?** story after another," he stated. "So you'll see in my run that our heroes will learn more about the mysterious Timebroker who sends them on these missions and eventually their motivation will evolve from simply wanting to return to their previous lives to something much more pro-active."

"Stick around and see what I mean," he concluded.

***Exiles** #46, priced $2.99, ships May 5.*

Occult P.I. boards Last Train

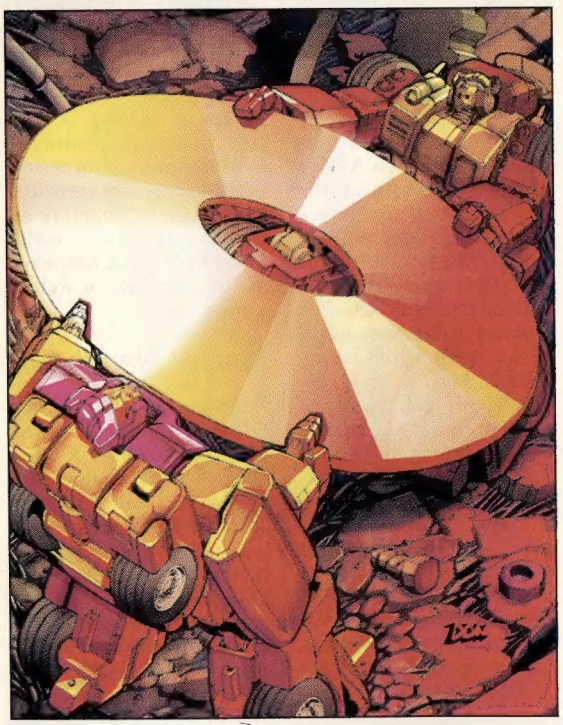
*Above: Kelley Jones' cover art for the second $2.99 issue of Dark Horse's **Cal McDonald: Last Train to Deadsville** four-parter, which debuts on May 12.*

CURRENT horror meister Steve Niles is sending his supernatural private eye on a road trip that is to reveal secrets of the detective's past.

Cal McDonald's latest investigation begins with a knock at his door. Standing there is a bizarre family – described as straight out of the movie *Deliverance* – and they have a possessed teenager with them.

But there's more to the youngster than first meets the eye as McDonald discovers when, accompanied by Mo'Lock, his zombie associate, he takes the **Last Train to Deadsville** in a Dark Horse four-parter illustrated by **Batman** and **Deadman**'s Kelley Jones.

Tiny Transformers



DREAMWAVE is to introduce a whole new batch of Robots in Disguise into comics via a June-launching miniseries.

Written by Adam Patyk and Brad Mick and drawn by Rob Ruffs – the Ontario-based publisher's art director, the four-issue **Transformers: Micromasters** features a group of robots somewhat smaller than the average Transformer.

"The Micromasters are itsy, bitsy Transformers," explained Mick, who also writes **Transformers: Generation One**. "They are actually a new breed of Transformers, created specifically to help the Autobots and Decepticons survive the final battles leading up to the catastrophic event known as the Great Shutdown. So, similar to **The War Within** miniseries, **Micromasters** takes place in Cybertron's past."

"The Micromasters never really appeared in any cartoons outside of Japan," added **Transformers: Armada**'s Patyk, "So this comic is going to establish our definitive view on the characters, their world, and how they fit into the overall Transformers mythos."

Bishop turns cop

*Marvel drafts in British **Strange Embrace** creator to spearhead trawl down dark streets of ghetto where less fortunate mutants congregate*

"I GUESS this is where I tell you that **District X** is '*CSI* meets *Twin Peaks*' or – for the British readers – 'Judge Dredd meets *EastEnders*," writer David Hine responded when **CI** asked him for the high-concept pitch for his first Marvel US assignment.

Morrison concept

Better-known for creating 1993's **Strange Embrace** [Atomeka] and, following his Big Ben work for **Warrior**, as an artist on **2000 AD** and various mid-'90s Marvel UK titles, Hine is writing the Marvel Knights series. It is, he says, based on a concept by Grant Morrison. "He came up with the idea of Mutant Town, an area of Manhattan populated by the mutants who don't get to dress up in skintight costumes and fight the bad guys. **District X** is a book that exists on the borders of the Marvel Universe, with one foot in the real world.

"Costumed superheroes are not really my bag but the concept of **District X** appealed to me," he added. "I really like police thrillers, noir films and offbeat mutant stories, and this book is all of that."

District X – pencilled by **Aria: The Soul Market**'s David Yardin – revolves around the partnership between Ismael Ortega, a uniform cop, and Bishop, who's been assigned the task of keeping a lid on the turf war, which is developing between two mutant gangs, Hine explained. "This is Bishop the detective, rather than Bishop the superhero. There is also a huge cast of supporting characters; essentially the entire population of District X. Their stories will weave in and out of the major plot lines."

***District X* #1, priced $2.99, ships on May 12.**

*Above: Steve McNiven's art for the cover to **District X** #1.*

*OFTEN overshadowed if not totally eclipsed by Warren Publishing's **Creepy** and **Eerie**, Skywald's short-lived Horror-Mood line is the subject of a 224-page tome from Headpress. Published under the Manchester-based company's Critical Vision imprint, **Skywald! The Complete Illustrated History of the Skywald Horror-Mood** [cover above, art by Pablo Marcos] offers the inside story of the uniquely influential horror comic publisher. It is edited by the late Alan Hewetson, who, as Archaic Al, created the look and style of the black and white **Psycho**, **Nightmare** and **Scream**. Shipping in August, the title – which includes reprints of 21 stories and covers the entire history of the company from its beginnings in 1970 to its collapse in 1975 – is priced £16.95. Advance ordering from Headpress – www.headpress.com – saves £3 off the cost of the softcover, which is replete with unpublished art.*

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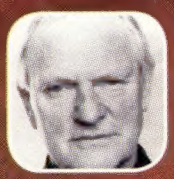
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*ONE OF the first and most successful of the superhero titles to emerge from the 1980s indie publishing scene, Mark Evanier and Will Meugniot's **DNAgents**, ran across two volumes at Eclipse from 1983 to 1987. All 41 issues featuring the adventures of the five laboratory-manufactured teenage superheroes are to be reprinted by About Comics in a biannual series of trade paperbacks launching in June. The initial black and white volume* [cover above, art by Meugniot] *contains the first six issues. A 160-pager, it retails for $9.95.*

Ninja master's secrets revealed

ONE OF the most popular members of the G.I. Joe team is to be spotlighted in a three-parter that explores the relationship between him and his protégé.

Published by Devil's Due, **Master & Apprentice** is by the current and the former writers of the core **G.I. Joe** series, Brandon Jerwa and Josh Blaylock.

Illustrated by Stefano Casselli, a relative newcomer whose credits are limited to a **Hack/slash: Euthanized** one-shot for Devil's Due, it features the Silent Master of the Arashikage Ninja Clan – better known as Snake-Eyes – and Kamakura, to whom he is teaching the Japanese techniques for being a covert agent skilled in the martial arts. Created by Blaylock, the youngster – who debuted in the 2003 first issue of Devil's Due's **G.I. Joe** relaunch – is now part of the Hasbro action figure line from which the comic is a spin-off.

*Above: Stefano Casselli's cover art for the first issue of Devil's Due's **G.I. Joe** three-parter, **Master & Apprentice**.*

Master & Apprentice reveals why Snake-Eyes gave up the woman he loves and came out of retirement to pass on his skills to Kamakura, a young man he had never previously met.

● Since Hasbro launched its ***G.I. Joe*** action figure line in 1964, spin-off comics have also been published by Custom Comics, Marvel and Dark Horse.

***G.I. Joe: Master & Apprentice** #1, priced $2.95, ships in May.*

Raven House opens

***El Cazador** writer reunites with Argentinian **Doom: The Emperor Returns** artist Leonardo Manco to bring gothic horror to CrossGen*

BELEAGUERED CrossGen is continuing to diversify its line in the wake of the apparent failure of its initial shared universe plans.

With piracy, spy thrillers and all-age fantasy already represented in the form of **El Cazador**, **Kiss Kiss Bang Bang** and **Abadazad**, the Florida-based publisher is moving into gothic horror with a new series from Chuck Dixon and Leonardo Manco, his art partner on **Doom: The Emperor Returns**.

Asked about the difficulties of adapting gothic horror – which is more about atmosphere than action – to the comics medium for **Raven House**, Dixon told **CI**, "It's been done before and successfully. DC did a number of gorgeous gothics back in the early '70s as special editions. I think John Albano was the writer and I recall two exceptional ones by Alex Toth and Tony DeZuniga.

"Warren Publishing also did a number of stories that qualified as gothics in **Creepy** and **Eerie**," added Dixon. "So, it's not exactly untested ground. And I have Leonardo Manco as an artist and his stories usually drip with atmosphere and that nagging feeling of dread. And at CrossGen we're not afraid of deliberate pacing, the kind of building of tension required for this sort of project."

As for Raven House itself, the **El Cazador** writer said it sits on the Cornish coast perpetually in shadow and gloom. "It's a place layered in long-buried secrets."

*Above: The cover to **Raven House** #1; art by Leonardo Manco.*

Villainous rogue

"Merry Park arrives to tutor the young son of Lord Dalamar. Dalamar's a distant kind of guy and he and his servants keep to themselves in their own wing of this cavernous old manor house," he explained.

"What are they doing in there?" Dixon asked rhetorically while listing the series' various mysteries. "Why is the father so remote from his own son? What's with the creepy groundskeeper stalking around the property at all hours? And who is the villainous rogue who keeps spying on Merry and her young charge from afar? See where we're going with all this?"

Not yet, Chuck.

***Raven House** #1, priced $2.95, ships in June.*

Bounty hunter wages bio-war

THE influx of newcomers looking to use Image as a springboard to the big time continues.

Among the latest looking for an entrée via the California-based cooperative are writer Steve Albertson and Jacob Elijiah, the artist who created **Ghost Spy**.

Set in a grim, war-ravaged future, the six-parter focuses on a young bounty hunter named Keico Loc, who plies her trade on Chi-Nova's ultra-violent streets.

Infected with Adrenafin, she decides to take control of her own life when she is hired to deliver samples of that biological toxin to an underground bio-warfare complex.

The realisation that her contract forms part of a diabolical plot to release the experimental chemical into the city puts Loc on a collision course with the manufactuers of Adrenafin. Aided by the ambitiously violent Rame and Griggs, she fights her way across Chi-Nova, destroying anything that gets in her way; men and machines alike.

***Ghost Spy** #1, priced $2.95, ships on May 26.*

*Above: The cover to **Ghost Spy** #1; art by Jacob Elijiah.*

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Freak on loose at Image

AFTER Marvel and Moonstone, artist Lee Ferguson is moving across to Image where he is writing as well as drawing his first graphic novel.

A 64-pager, **Freak** is the story of Alex, a man who knows our world is only one aspect of a reality filled with forces beyond our comprehension. He can see and feel the entire supernatural domain, which most of mankind will never experience.

Alex is different. He is cursed with an unimaginable power, one that has taken everything from him and driven him to the brink of madness.

Left with none of the things that define him as a person, he is changing. But what will be become?

● Ferguson's credits include **X-Men Icons: Chamber** and **Mr Keen: Tracer of Lost Persons**.

***Freak**, priced $6.95, ships on May 19.*

Those BASTARDS are going to KILL US ALL!!!
FUCK THAT!
I ain't sitting here waiting to get fried...
It's KILL or BE KILLED!!!
I hear ya bro!!!

SHOWN above is art from A-crazy-A, *which* ***The Possessed****'s Liam Sharp says is "a violent sexy sci-fi comedy I wrote with Simon Bisley in mind to draw it but I ended up doing it myself." The story, which is lined up for a forthcoming issue of* ***Heavy Metal****, features Playboy model – and girlfriend of System of a Down drummer – Tiffany Taylor as the title character. "It's basically 12 pages of mayhem that tips its hat to the classic* ***HM*** *stories of the late '70/early '80s – but with a 2004 spin," said Sharp, who told* ***CI****, "It's a typically OTT* ***Heavy Metal*** *story with all the trimmings: sex, violence, comedy and sci-fantasy. It's got a more serious heart, in that it's basically an antiwar fable – but it's not to be taken too seriously." Sharp's next project is a WildStorm 12-parter,* ***The Chosen****, written by John (****Doom Patrol****) Arcudi.*

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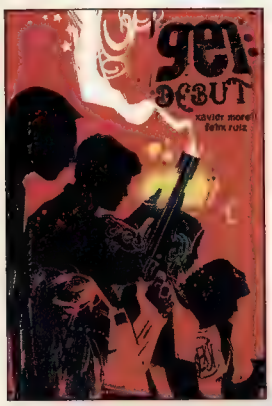
Spanish titles in US deal

FOR DECADES Spanish artists have been working on US comics, but it is has taken until now for titles published in their homeland to become available in America.

Cyberosia Publishing has signed a deal not only to produce English language editions of comics published by Alecta/Recerca, but also, in something of a first, to offer a Spanish language version of those titles to America's growing population of Spanish-speakers.



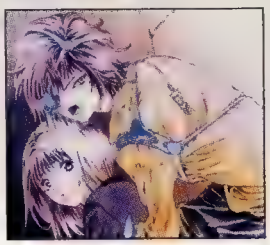
Pictured: Cover art for the first two titles in Cyberosia's Alecta/ Recerca line: ***Probabilities*** *[above] by Olga Carmona Peral and* ***GEI*** *[below] by Felix Ruiz.*

"A lot of the traditional Vertigo-style books, the dark superhero/horror titles, have ended," Cyberosia head Scott O. Brown told **CI**. "I think there's still an audience for those kinds of books, and teaming up with Recerca was the easiest way to not only meet that demand, but also expose the US audience to some really cool comics being produced overseas."

Cyberosia kicks off its Alecta/Recerca line in May with the $3.50 **GEI**, a bi-monthly featuring a team of freaks and weirdos dealing with threats from the unknown.

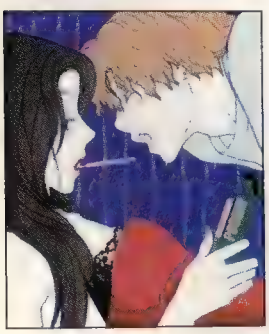
The 56-page, black and white **Probabilities** follows in June. It's a one-shot title described as a psychological horror story, and priced $7.95.

Warriors, tramps & teens



THE stream of new manga titles hitting the US seems never ending and TokyoPop is preparing to introduce another six 192-pagers into the mix on August 10.

The $9.99 books cover several genres, with science fiction represented by Shinya Kuwahara's **Warriors of Tao**, a tale of interplanetary gladiators, and **Abenobashi: Magical Shopping Arcade** – an SF/comedy by **Neon Genesis Evangeline**'s Gainax and Akahori Satoru of **Saber Marionette J**.



Pictured: Cover art for the first volumes of TokyoPop's ***Tramps like Us*** [above] *and* ***Warriors of Tao*** [top].

Romance comes in the form of **Tramps Like Us** – Yayoi Ogawa's romantic comedy, which took home the coveted trophy at the 27th Kodansha Manga Awards – and **Dream Saga** by the winner of **Nakayoshi** magazine's 'New Face' Manga award, shojo creator Megumi Tachikawa.

The line up is completed by up and coming manga-ka Tow Nakazaki's **Et Cetera** – described as a wacky take on how the West was won – and **Instant Teen: Just Add Nuts**, Haruka Fukushima's comedy about a young girl suddenly transformed into a beautiful, sexy woman.

Elves on fresh quest

WITH the **Elfquest** reprint programme well under way, Wendy and Richard Pini are embarking on the first new story in their saga of the Wolfriders since DC acquired the property in 2003.

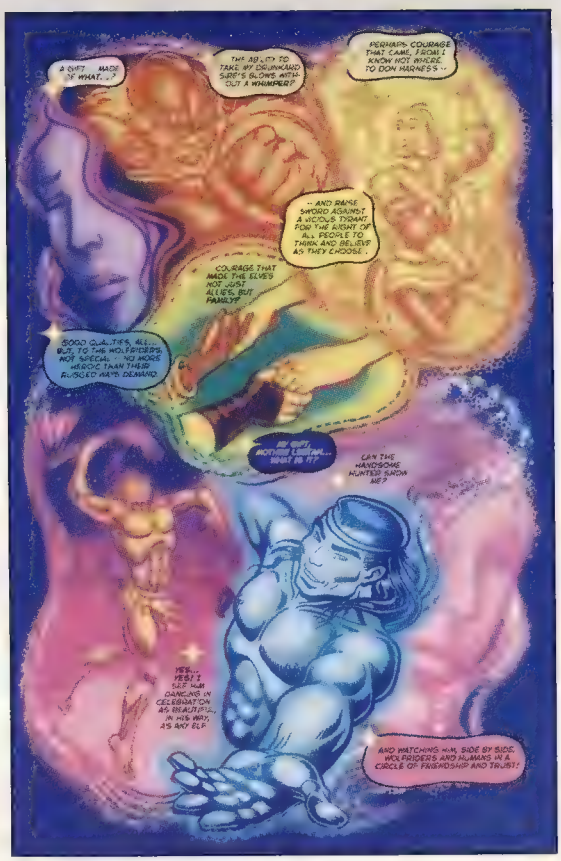
Illustrated by Wendy Pini and jointly written by the husband and wife team, **The Searcher and the Sword** is a 96-page hardcover which finds the elves trying to adapt to a world without the troll smiths, who forged their weapons and tools.

Troll weapons

Asked about the significance of the title, Richard Pini told **CI**, "Shuna [the adopted human daughter of Cutter and Leetah] is searching for a way to unite elves and humans, and Treestump's searching for a way to recreate the metallurgy of the trolls – it seemed both intriguing and alliterative to us without being obscure."

Refusing to be drawn into specifics, Pini commented, "This story takes place after events chronicled in the **Shards** storyline that we [WaRP] published in comicbook form between 1994 and 1996 and reprinted in the **Shards**, **Legacy** and **Ascent** volumes of the **Reader's Collection**.

"The Wolfriders are in their new Holt, resurrected on the site of the one the humans burned down so long ago," he stated. "The trolls however, are long gone. So when the elves' metal weapons start to break or otherwise become unusable, Treestump tries to recreate the knowledge of the troll smiths, to better serve his tribe."


A GIFT... MADE OF WHAT...?
THE AUDACITY TO TAKE MY DRUNKARD SIRE'S BLOWS WITHOUT A WHIMPER!
PERHAPS COURAGE THAT CAME, FROM I KNOW NOT WHERE, TO DON HARNESS...
... AND RAISE SWORD AGAINST A VICIOUS TYRANT, FOR THE SAKE OF ALL PEOPLE TO THINK AND BELIEVE AS THEY CHOOSE!
COURAGE THAT MADE THE ELVES NOT JUST ALLIES, BUT FAMILY?
GOOD QUALITIES, ALL BUT, TO THE WOLFRIDERS, NOT SPECIAL. NO MORE HEROIC THAN THEIR RUGGED WAYS DEMAND
BE GIFT, MORTAL LIKEWISE... WHAT IS IT?
CAN THE HANDSOME HUNTER SHOW ME?
YES... YES! I SEE HIM DANCING IN CELEBRATION AS BEAUTIFUL... IN HIS WAY, AS ANY ELF
AND WATCHING HIM, SIDE BY SIDE, WOLFRIDERS AND HUMANS IN A CIRCLE OF FRIENDSHIP AND TRUST!

The **Elfquest** saga began in **Fantasy Quarterly** #1 [1978] but Pini did not see the 25-year history as an obstacle to new readers. "Longtime fans will have no trouble with the material, and new readers will have enough hints and references that they should be able to enjoy the read even if they have never touched another **Elfquest** book. We're very aware of the premise that every new book or issue is someone's first exposure to the world of **Elfquest**."

Human condition

Summing up, he added, "It's a complete tale in one book within the wider **Elfquest** saga. Just as we've tried to do all throughout **Elfquest**'s history, we include elements of humour, drama, action, contemplation. There are some strong statements about relationships and the human condition that we hope will affect people in a positive way, get them to think, perhaps even about situations in their own lives.

"The theme is the same as it's always been: knowledge versus ignorance and the consequences of either one coming out on top," Pini concluded.

Elfquest: The Searcher and the Sword *hardcover, priced $24.95, ships on July 21.*

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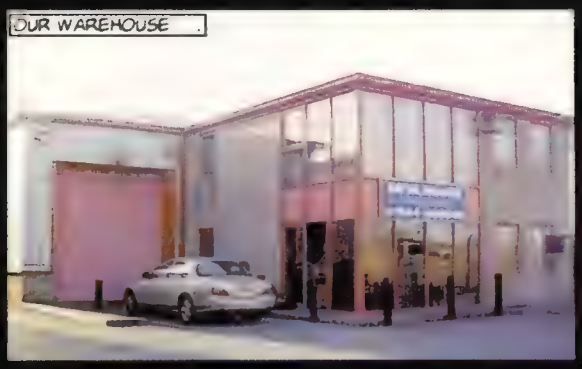

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Titan's wave of nostalgia hits UK

WHILE US publishers are digging through their archives from the Golden Age to the end of the 20th century looking for more and more material to offer in collections, London-based Titan Books is choosing to reprint classic British stories that have already been available before in compilations.

Of Titan's three imminent titles, its reprints of the *James Bond* and *Modesty Blaise* newspaper strips are reissues of collections it previously released in the 1980s – albeit with additional feature material. Its **Dan Dare** series retreads the path first taken by Dragon's Dream in 1979 and then by Hawk Books eight years later.

Asked why these titles and why now, editor Nick Jones told **CI**, "The simple answer is, we decided to publish these books because none of the material had been in print for a good many years, and it all deserved to be. Each of these series are prime examples of great British comic strips, showcasing creators at the top of their game."

Above: The cover to ***Voyage to Venus*** *Part 1; art by Frank Hampson. The first title in Titan's* ***Dan Dare*** *compilations, the 160-page hardcover is published in March, priced £12.99.*

Alex Ross

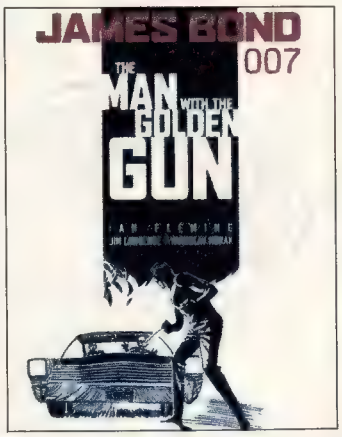
"The Bond books feature the gritty Jim Lawrence/Yaroslav Horak adaptations of Ian Fleming's novels, the Modesty series reprints Peter O'Donnell and Jim Holdaway's classic adventures from the very beginning and the **Dan Dare** books begin with Frank Hampson's first epic Venus adventure. Any of these comic strips can hold their own against the best that the medium produced in the 20th Century."

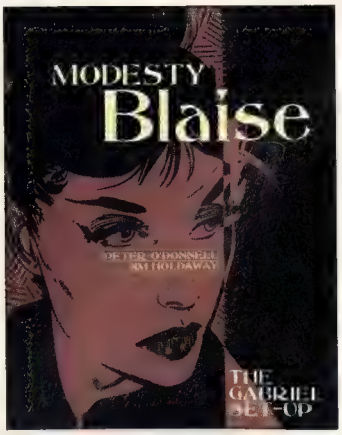
Asked what the target audience is given that most of the stories being reprinted are 40-50 years old, Jones responded, "We're targeting both older readers who might remember the material from first time round, and newer readers who might not be aware of how fantastic this stuff is.

"Fact is," he continued, "*Dan Dare*, *Modesty Blaise* and the *James Bond* strip are as compelling and readable today as they were on first publication. *Dan Dare*, for example, is a beautifully rendered piece of comics art, and the way Hampson and his team created the strip has parallels with how an artist like Alex Ross creates his work today, using painstaking photo-reference and scale models. The supplementary material in the books explores this and more."

Additional material for the large format volumes includes articles exploring the 007 novels and the comics spin-offs for the Bond series, while the first Modesty Blaise collection has an examination of the Blaise phenomenon as well as a piece by O'Donnell about his World War II encounter with the girl on whom the character was based.

The **Dan Dare** hardcovers include a who's who guide to the strip's characters and an in-depth look at the genesis of the **Eagle** series.





Above: The covers to the £10.99 titles in Titan's revamped reissue of its 1980s collections reprinting the James Bond *and* Modesty Blaise *newspaper strips. The 80-page* ***Man with the Golden Gun*** [left, art by Yaroslav Horak] *is available now while the 112-page* ***Gabriel Set-Up*** [right, art by Jim Holdaway] *is published on March 26.*

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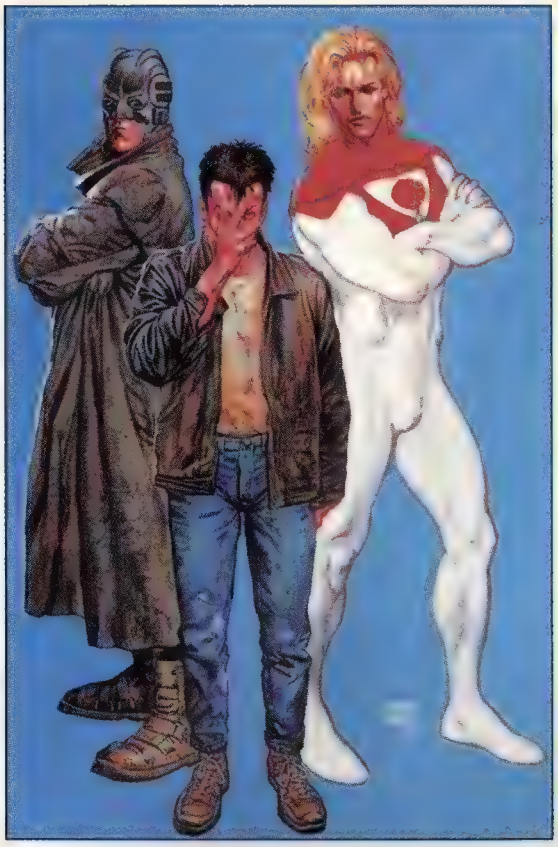
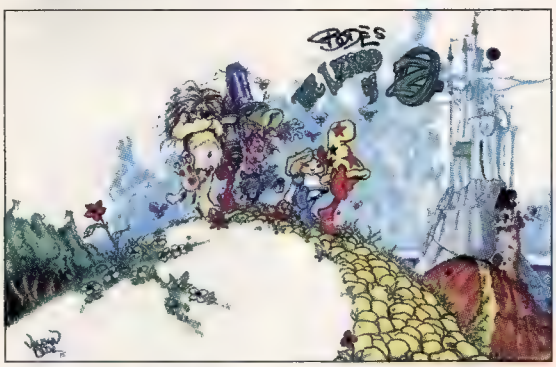


KEV'S back. Corporal Kev Hawkins, that is. Following up on their 2002 ***The Authority: Kev*** *one-shot, writer Garth Ennis and artist Glenn Fabry have got back together to give the down-on-his-luck SAS operative an extended run for his money in the aptly-titled* ***The Authority: More Kev****. The $2.95 WildStorm four-parter depicts the unfortunate soldier as Earth's last line of defence against an alien armada poised to assault the planet, bent on destruction and genocide. The first issue* [cover above] *hits the shelves on May 26.*



Bodé meets Baum

ALMOST 30 years after the failed auto-erotic experience that ended Vaughn Bodé's life in strangulation, one of his last projects is being brought to fruition by his son.

Working from ideas the self-acclaimed cartoon Messiah had been developing, Mark Bodé is to introduce his late father's signature character into the fantasy world created by renowned children's author, L Frank Baum.

A 8½x11" Fantagraphics release, **The Lizard of Oz** stars Cheech Wizard in the fantasy world. The 64-page graphic novel, which features a cover *[above]* by Vaughn Bodé, also includes many of the other cartoon characters created by the underground comix icon and inspiration for much of today's street art.

The book, which is said to pay playful homage to the classic L Frank Baum fairy tale – and its MGM film adaptation – also contains a lengthy exploration of both Bodé and Baum's legacies by Bodé expert and **Paper** magazine writer Carlo McCormick.

The Lizard of Oz*, price $12.95, ships in May.*

New Excalibur is drawn

WRITER Chris Claremont is to relaunch **Excalibur**, a title he co-created. But the move does not signal the return of the team known as the British X-Men, as he explained to **CI**.

"Just because the book's entitled **Excalibur** doesn't make it a relaunch of the original concept," protested the writer. "This series draws its genesis from the premise that Xavier and the X-Men are themselves inspired by the legend of Arthur and the Round Table."

Charley's knights

Referring to Marvel's May restructuring of its X-Men franchise, Claremont continued, "In essence, the world pre-*Reload* is akin to Arthur's Britain after the final battle with Mordred, only in this instance it appears that our Arthur – Charley – has survived. While his 'knights' – the X-Men – proceed without him, redefining and re-invigorating the Dream in their own terms, he is drawn to Genosha, which might have been the mutant Camelot.

"Because of his 'relationship' with Cassandra, he feels responsible for the destruction of the country and more importantly, for the 16 million dead," he added. "As one of the leaders of the first generation of mutants he feels an obligation to shepherd and guide the latest – third – generation to maturity, lest Genosha become a template for the future of the Earth and humanity."

Crippled hero

"And also, it's a great opportunity to play with Charley himself, to attempt to define him as a man and an action hero," the writer explained. "So what if he's a functional paraplegic, and rides a wheelchair? That doesn't mean he's crippled. Look at Oracle. Who is he, really and as important, why is he? What shaped him? What is there about him that inspires teenagers to bond to his cause and ideals, to such an extent that it becomes the defining element of their lives?"

Above: Andy Parks' "pick-a-mutant" ***Excalibur*** *#1 cover art*

Lives at risk

Warming to the theme, he continued, "What is there about Charley that accepts the necessity of recruiting these kids and sending them off into battle, where they regularly risk – and occassionally lose – their lives? Lots of questions that have rarely, if ever, been addressed, much less answered. All providing ample source material for stories."

British superhero

Captain Britain has always been an integral part of the **Excalibur** story. Asked if the title could exist without the British superhero he and artist Herb Trimpe introduced in his own weekly UK title in 1976, Claremont was adamant that it could.

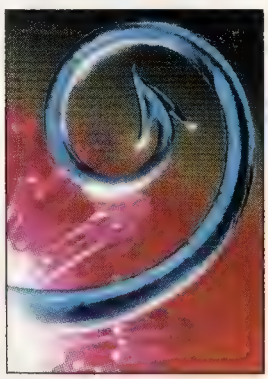
Artist dropped

Ironically, Claremont then went on to explain that he would be bringing back Captain Britain – aka Brian Braddock – elsewhere with his **Excalibur** co-creator, artist Alan Davis, at the same time as the launch of the new **Excalibur** series with artist Aaron Lopresti. The Captain Marvel and Mystic penciller was named as a last minute replacement for Igor Kordey, who was deemed unsuitable by editorial.

OtherWorld

Referring to his and Davis's *Reload* return to **Uncanny X-Men** with #444 and the fact that Captain Britain is to be an integral part of their opening arc, the writer said, "To me it makes far more sense to look for certain signature characters from **Excalibur** in a book being written and drawn by the creative team that actually created it.

"As far as Brian's current status, we pick up where I believe he was left off, having taken Roma's place as Magister of OtherWorld," he added. "Beyond that, well it's that 'surprise' thing again. Hard enough these days to keep anything secret. But we keep trying."



*Above: Developing a thematic but uninspired look for Marvel's core mutant titles are Alan Davis [****Uncanny X-Men*** *#444 cover art, left] and John Cassaday [****Astonishing X-Men*** *#1 cover art, right].*

Excalibur *#1, priced $2.99, ships on May 12.* ***Uncanny X-Men*** *#444, priced $2.25, ships on May 5.*

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JOHN Byrne is to resurrect the world's strangest super-hero team for DC. The one-time **X-Men** artist is writing and pencilling a new **Doom Patrol** comic to which he has given the slogan 'Together Again for the First Time.' The series launches in June off the back of the team's appearance in **JLA** #94, which is to be "the first time the Doom Patrol has appeared openly in the DC Universe," explained the writer/artist. The revised line-up is to include Gar (Beast Boy) Logan and a handful of new members alongside the Cliff Steel Robotman, Rita Farr (aka Elasti-Girl) and the Chief. Shown above is Byrne's cover to the first issue, which is inked by Doug Hazlewood.

Eisner finds Plot

EVEN at the age of 87, Will Eisner is showing no sign of slowing down.

The octogenarian is hard at work on his next project, which exposes the anti-Semitic tract *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

Originally published in 1903, *The Protocols* were fabricated by the Russian secret service, which used them to discredit leading Jewish reformists in Russia.

Subsequently, in 1921 **The Times** revealed that *The Protocols* were actually based on a French political satire published in 1864 by Maurice Joly. This made no reference to 'a secret cabal of Jewish bankers, journalists and financiers plotting to take over the world.' In fact Joly's satire had no anti-Semitic content of any kind.

Above: A page rough from Will Eisner's still in-development, factual graphic novel, **The Plot**.

Middle East

Eisner began work on **The Plot** after learning that *The Protocols* were still being utilised today in order to stir up hatred against Jews in the Middle East.

Currently unscheduled, and not as yet placed with a publisher, the 100-page work of non-fiction is divided into three sections. The first shows how Eisner came to learn of *The Protocols* and their history while the second takes a straightforward historical documentary look at their creation and subsequent exposure as fraudulent.

The Spirit creator's **Plot** closes by juxtaposing sections of *The Protocols* with excerpts from Joly's work, showing how one was derived from the other.

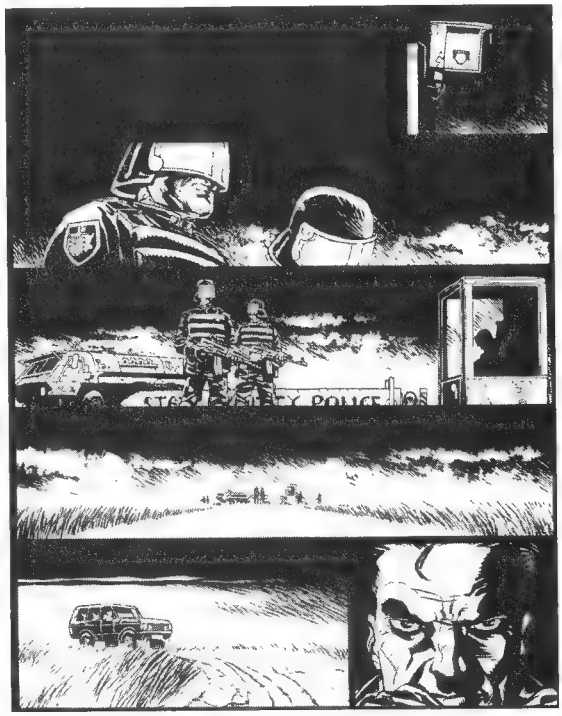
Rebellion restarts battle against Volgan invaders

Charlie Adlard gets Savage *as* Invasion *co-creator Pat Mills masterminds sequel to 1977* **2000 AD** *serial about fight against occupying forces*

SHOTGUN-wielding Cockney resistance leader Bill Savage is returning to continue the fight against the Volgan invaders, who have held Britain in their thrall since 1999.

He is to star in the aptly-titled *Savage*, a sequel to *Invasion!*, the 51-part serial which began in the very first issue of **2000 AD** and was recently reprinted in **2000 AD Extreme Edition** #3.

Savage is drawn by **The Establishment**'s Charlie Adlard and scripted by **Crisis** creator Pat Mills, who told **CI**, "It's a Resistance story – the way I would have written it had I had time when I originated the story back in 1977 at the beginning of **2000 AD.**"



Dead family

Mills created *Invasion!* but only wrote the first two episodes of the 1977 serial. Describing its basic premise, he said, "Britain has been invaded by Russia, disguised in the serial as the Volgan Republic of Asia. We focus on the story of a lorry driver whose family is killed during the Invasion. He then joins the British Resistance.

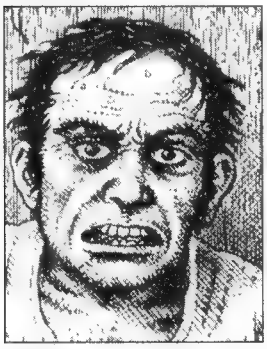
"That's where episodes one and two left the story," he explained. "In *Savage*, I follow this up... showing other members of his family and how the invasion has affected them. And what it's like to live under the heel of an invader. For this I used some inspiration from my travels in various countries."

Pictured: Pages from the first episode of Savage by Charlie Adlard in **2000 AD** Prog 1387. On sale April 28 priced £1.60 .

Slave workers

"For example," said Mills, a writer whose strong political convictions are often reflected in his work, "and paradoxically, the Western economic invasion of Bulgaria, which is seen by many in that country as a very physical invasion, and as a friend of mine said there, 'It's a war.' As a result, they are very poor compared to before. They sell chewing gum sticks individually out of the packet in some places. They're losing their properties to rich Westerners who are buying their houses for peanuts, their population is dropping like a stone. Many emigrate here to work for such low wages, they're not far off being slave workers.

"That's the reality of an invasion," he stated, "not just Bill Savage running around with a pump action shotgun, although there's plenty of that too. And so I considered... what would that feel like if it happened here? To us?"



Book deal for Pekar

THE success of the movie adaptation of his autobiographical **American Splendor** has thrust Harvey Pekar into the big time after more than 25 years of obscurity.

The success of the film has resulted in a four-book deal with Ballantine Books.

The mainstream publisher – which released a tie-in with the *American Splendor* movie – has signed Pekar to write three original graphic novels, the first of which is to be a sequel of sorts to the sleeper hit film.

It is also to issue an anthology collecting the best of his comicbook series.

Image gets new publisher

A SHIFT in direction could be on the horizon for Image as **Savage Dragon** creator Erik Larsen replaces Jim Valentino as publisher at the struggling California-based cooperative.

With their market share continuing to slip, the Image partners, which include Todd McFarlane and Marc Silvestri as well as Larsen and Valentino, have voted for a change at the top.

Discussing the move – which also sees director of marketing Eric Stephenson promoted to managing editor – Larsen says he is to lead a shift towards more superhero books and away from what he describes as his predecessor's emphasis on 'cutting edge, alternative comics'.

"My roots are in the more mainstream camp," Larsen explained.

Update for pulp thief

JLA: AGE of Wonder writer Adi Tantimedh is trying his luck with the crime genre in a 21st century reworking of a pulp hero whose first appearance was in 1925.

In collaboration with Spanish artist Diego Olmos, a newcomer, Tantimedh is resurrecting Blackshirt, the gentlemen safe-cracker created by Bruce Graeme, as a former SAS man-turned-best-selling author, who is bored with just being a writer.

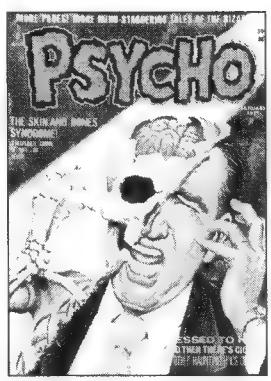
"He dresses up in black and goes out at night to commit sophisticated but petty break-ins for the hell of it," the writer explained. "Then a mysterious woman contacts him and blackmails him into using his talents to do good for a change, lest she shop him to the authorities and his enemies."

Graeme's hero is reintroduced in a 96-page black and white Moonstone graphic novel, which Tantimedh describes as "a noir thriller, dark and moody with a story predominantly involving crime and sexual obsession."

***Blackshirt**, priced $9.95, ships in July.*

*Above: Diego Olmos interior art from Moonstone's **Blackshirt**.*

Skywald editor 1945-2004



*Above: The cover to **Psycho** #1 [1971; art by Brendan Lynch.*

ALAN Hewetson died of a heart attack in Windsor, Ontario, Canada on January 6, aged 57.

Known to fans of Skywald's *Horror-Mood* line of black and white magazines as Archaic Al, Hewetson was born in Scotland in 1946 although he emigrated with his family to Canada in the early 1950s.

He began his comics career as a writer with his first published story seeing print in **Eerie** #26. He went on to contribute several more tales to Warren Publishing's titles before being invited to become editor of its rival, Skywald's competing line.

He was responsible for invigorating **Nightmare**, **Psycho** and **Scream** and for forging a unique identity for the black and white magazines. Hewetson remained at Skywald until the company collapsed in 1975 and then left comics although he remained in publishing.

He is survived by Wendy, his ex-wife; his partner, Michelle Lemieux, two children from that relationship and one grandson.

CI #168 Hellboy competition winners

IN **CI** #168, one lucky reader was offered the opportunity to win a copy of Titans Books' £37.95 **The Art of Hellboy** deluxe hardback. The winner is: **JON REID** of South Bank Avenue, Aberdeen.

Runners up, receiving a copy of **Hellboy: Word Tales** are:

Dave Bannister, York
B C Bean, Dovecote, Wolvs
J Bignell, Stonehouse, Glos
J Bright, Newmarket, Suffolk
Rob Caulfield, Braintree, Essex
Jon Kenneth, London SE21
B Millward, Belper, Derbyshire
Craig Mitchell, Newcastle
Roger Myers, Bracknell, Berks
D Phillips, Castleknock, Dublin
G Probert, Ebbw Vale, Gwent
D Richards, Ashleworth, Glos
Robin Sambhi, Heath, Cardiff
Gail Taylor, Dumfries
Michael Wigg, North Harrow

Reader votes scored the 15 most popular sections of the issue as:

1 News International (18.8%)
2 Hellboy feature (17.7%)
3 Don Lawrence feature (10.5%)
4 Reviews (10.2%)
5 Advance Listings (6.3%)
6= NetWorks/competition (4.7%)
8 In the Gutter (4.5%)
9 Letters/Comic Cuts (3.8%)
10 Sez Dez (3.5%)

For the first time in living memory (well, our crumbling grey cells anyway), a feature article almost toppled the news section at the top spot. Congratulations to writer Steve Turner for challenging news editor Mike Conroy.

The highest scoring section as the least popular feature was "None, they're all fine" – very encouraging at 21.6%, with Panel Beaters second at 13.7% and Talking Shop third at 9.8%. Watch younrselves, boys!

In Brief

UNLIKELY American comics guests at a convention dedicated to acclaimed SF author Sir Arthur C Clarke include Sotheby's comic art historian/author: **The Comic Art Price Guide** Jerry Weist and David A. Kyle, co-creator of Gnome Press.

Representing British creators at Odyssey 2004 are Mike Collins, Ian Edginton and Henry Flint. Further details about the event, which is being held on May 8-9 at the Tacchi-Morris Arts Centre in Taunton, are available from http://mysite.freeserve.com/

THERE'S Something about Mary is a five-pager running in **2000 AD** Prog 1384, on sale on April 7.

A tie-in with the soon-to-be-released *Shaun of the Dead*, it is written by the film's authors, Simon *(Spaced)* Pegg and Edgar Wright, who are also the film's star and director. The strip is drawn by Frazer Irving.

FREE Comic Book Day 2004 will be held on July 3 to tie in with the US premiere of *Spider-Man 2*.

PETER Hogan and Alan Moore are developing a sequel to their six-issue America's Best Comics series, **Terra Obscura**.

Rejoining the writers for the unscheduled follow up are artists Yanick Paquette and Karl Story.

CROSSGEN has axed **Brath**, which ends with June's #17.

The creative team of writer Chuck Dixon and penciller Andrea Di Vito then move over to Dabel Brothers Prodeuctions for the tentatively-titled **The Wheel of Time: A New Spring**. The 20-parter adapts Robert Jordan's just released novel, **A New Spring**.

THE INTERNATIONAL Comics Art Festival is once again being held on conjunction with the Small Press Expo, which is taking place as usual in Bethesda, Maryland.

SPX, North America's premier alternative comic-book festival, is being held on October 1-3. ICAF, an international conference for scholars, creators and enthusiasts of comics, precedes it, running from September 30 to October 2.

Further details are available from www.spxpo.com or http://go.to/icaf

WARREN Ellis and Stuart Immonen are to take over **Ultimate Fantastic Four** with the June-shipping #7.

GARY Gianni is the new *Prince Valiant* artist.

He takes over on March 21 from John Cullen Murphy, who is retiring from the newspaper strip he took over from original illustrator Hal Foster in 1980.

PAGE 45

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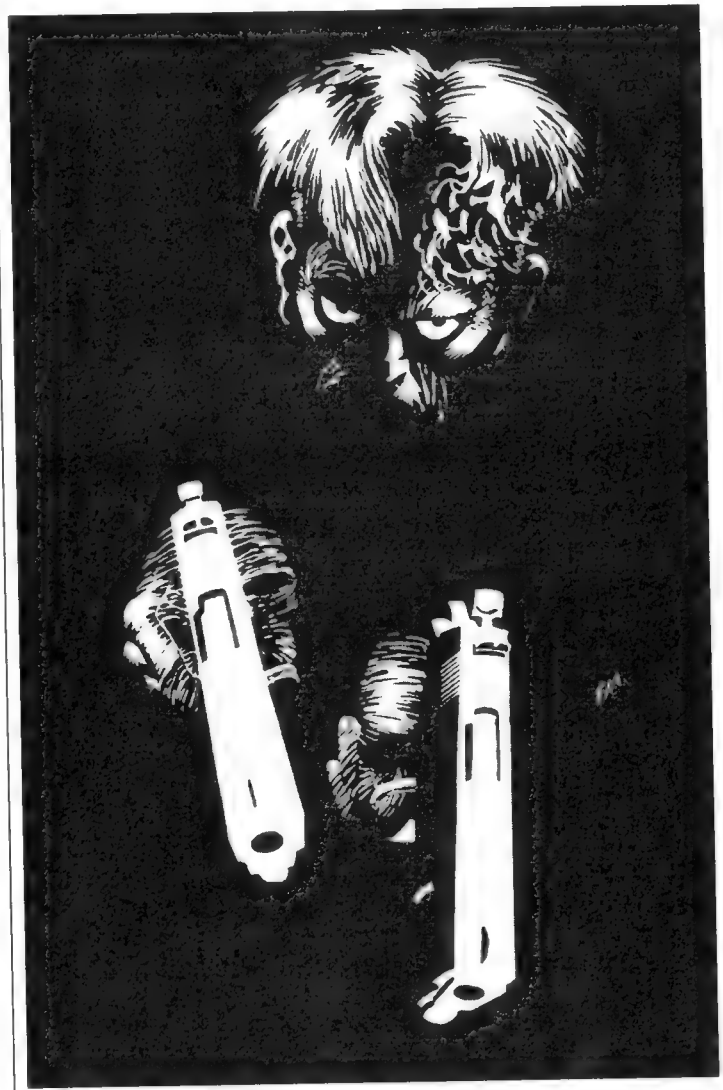
Dusk Till Dawn director gets on the fast track to Frank Miller's Sin City

Mike Conroy's Frame to Frame

Charting the latest news between films and comics



IT'S Miller time. Fox is developing *Elektra,* based on Frank Miller's **Elektra Saga**, while Warner Bros has in the pipeline *Hard Boiled* – the **Batman: Dark Knight Returns** creator's collaboration with artist Geof Darrow. But it's Dimension Films that is likely to be the first into the cinemas with a Frank Miller movie.

A *Sin City* movie has burst out of nowhere and onto the fast track with Robert Rodriguez at the helm.

Reportedly the director of *El Mariachi* and *Desperado* has already got the opening 10 minutes in the can. He shot it earlier this year in Austin, Texas with *Blackhawk Down*'s Josh Hartnett and Marley (*Trojan Wars*) Shelton in front of the camera.

Renowned for working at speed, Rodriguez involves himself in all aspects of the filmmaking process. As something of a renaissance man, he's the only one of all the modern directors who has the ability to perform all the behind-the-camera chores by himself. A skilled camera-man and special effects wizard, his talents encompass writing, photo-graphing, editing and directing as well as scoring his films.

Anyone only familiar with his work from the *Spy Kids* trilogy could be forgiven for thinking he's the wrong man for the job. To see why he's ideally suited, check out the opening sequence of *Desperado* or take a look at *From Dusk Till Dawn* – at least until it gets to the Tittie Twister – to see how he handles violent cinematic crime.

Rodriguez is producing the film with Elizabeth Avellan through their Troublemaker Studios label and intends to incorporate storylines from three of Miller's graphic novels rather than adapt one single title. His film is to be based around the initial 1991 *Sin City* story – serialised in **Dark Horse Presents** – plus **The Big Fat Kill** [1994] and 1996's **That Yellow Bastard**.

"This is the first time a graphic novel will be treated with absolute respect in how it is brought to life," Rodriguez stated recently. "My pitch to Frank was that I didn't want to adapt **Sin City** but rather translate it to the screen.

"I also wanted him involved in every aspect of the production, including sharing in the directing," he added. "If you look at his books, you see that in a way they are already the best written, shot and directed movies never seen in a theatre."

For his part, Miller commented, "Robert came to me with a bold, coherent plan to bring my baby to the screen. This is gonna be a whole new kind of crime movie."

Miller's 300

Also in development is *300*, a movie about the Battle of Thermopylae based on Miller's 1998 five-parter of the same name.

It's an epic story of the Greek heroic stand against the Persians that's been filmed before as *The 300 Spartans*. That flick came out in 1962 during an era of sword and sandal movies and there's a similar synergy at work in Hollywood at the moment.

Also in the pipeline are Wolfgang Petersen's big budget retelling of the siege of *Troy* starring Brad Pitt and an Oliver Stone directed biography of *Alexander the Great* with Colin Farrell in the title role. Another movie based on the Macedonian's conqueror's life story – starring Leonardo DiCaprio and directed by Baz Luhrmann – is reportedly on hold, waiting to see how the Stone/ Farrell project fares.

The only down side for *300* could also be a matter of timing. There's a *300 Spartans* remake in the works from Fox while George Clooney is looking to produce *Gates of Fire*, based on a novel set during the battle, with director Michael Mann.

Something's got to give, and if Luhrmann won't go head to head with Stone over *Alexander*, what are the chances of three armies of heroic Spartans making it to the screen?

The best movie in the world... probably

Did DC abort its Paradox Graphic Mystery line to soon?

The Road to Perdition, based on its second title, proved to be a major hit and now David Cronenberg has signed on to direct a film adaptation of the short-lived imprint's initial release, *A History of Violence*

The acclaimed horror director – whose credits include *Scanners*, *The Fly*, *Dead Ringers* and *Crash* – is currently adapting the 1997 pocket-sized graphic novel written by Judge Dredd co-creator John Wagner and drawn by **The Sandman**'s Vince Locke. It tells the story of a man who becomes a media celebrity, which alerts some vicious killers who come after him thinking he's the man they've been hunting for 20 years.

Crime may not be Cronenberg's forte but he's more than capable of pulling this off. *A History of Violence* could finally get Wagner the respect he deserves but was denied with the Dredd movie.

The film is scripted by Josh (*Infested*) Olsen, who described it as a sort of modern day *Unforgiven*. "There is some violence, but it is much more of a character-based drama. It's not in any way, shape or form what you could call a horror film or a genre film – though I don't want to sound like I'm looking down on those films. The violence that's in it is going to be pretty intense, but there are essentially three scenes, and the rest is the characters living with the cost of violence and the ramifications of it."

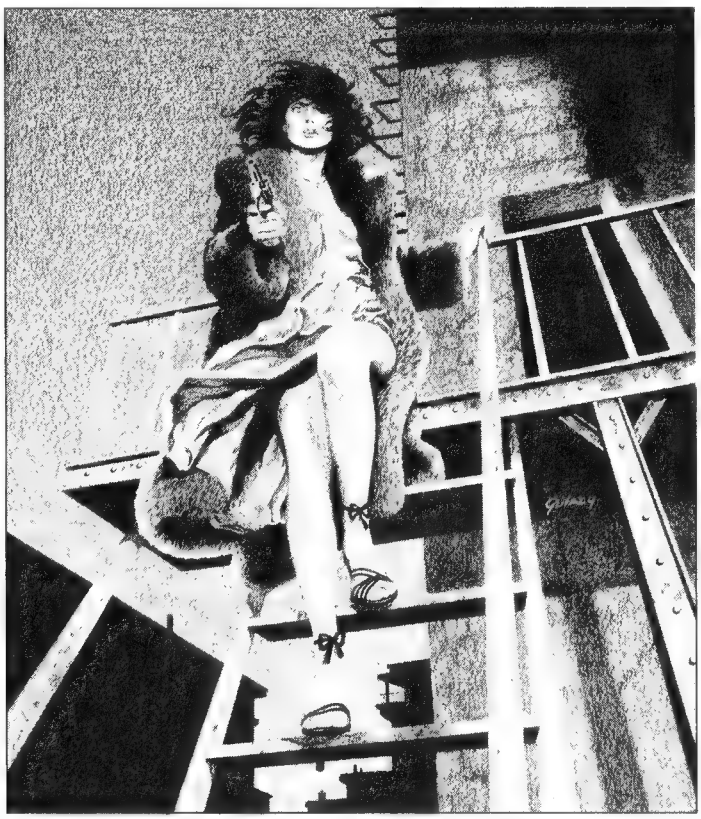
Above: Vincent Locke interior art from Paradox Press's 1997 graphic novel, ***A History of Violence.***

Black Widow

Good news for Lions Gate Entertainment – Marvel is expanding its relationship with the heir to the Artisan Entertainment deal.

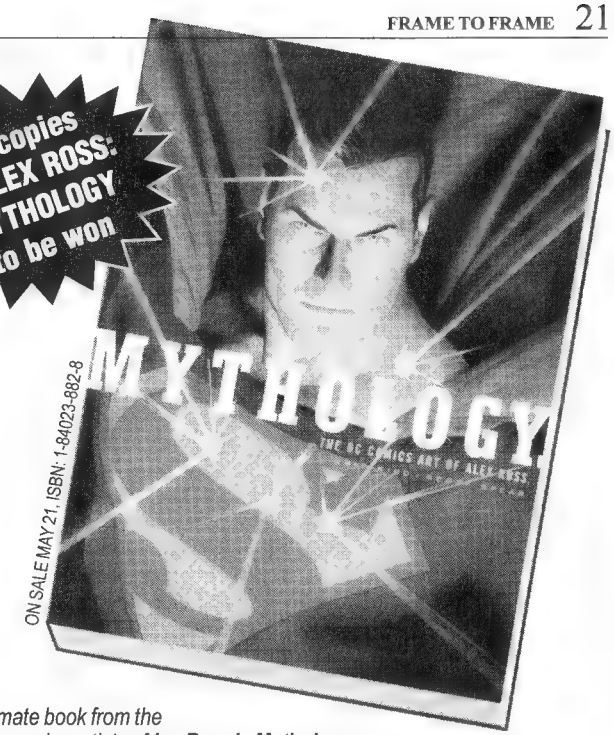
The new agreement allows Marvel to handle all merchandising rights on the three films announced as part of the arrangement. These include a *Punisher* sequel – already in development despite the first movie not getting released until April 16 – as well as *Black Widow* and *Iron Fist*.

Where that leaves the Lions Gate version of *Iron Fist* starring the Toad/Darth Maul actor Ray Park is anybody's guess.



Above: Marvel's former Soviet spy, Natasha Romanova, as depicted by Paul Gulacy in his 1982 ***Black Widow*** *portfolio. Facing page: Frank Miller* ***Sin City*** *art.*

CUT OUT COUPON ALONG DOTTED LINE



The ultimate book from the ultimate comics artist... ***Alex Ross's Mythology.***
Titan Books is pleased to offer 10 lucky readers the chance to win a copy of this new large format £24.99 hardback, colour-packed with Ross wonderment.

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Which of the following collections was not illustrated by Alex Ross?

a) Marvels
b) Universe X
c) Kingdom Come

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(Please print)

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(Street & number)

_____
(Town or city)

_____
(County or State, post code or zip code and country if outside UK)

The winners will be selected and announced in Comics International #172

Please also complete the following:
My five favourite features this issue are (please mark in order as *1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th* – no ticks):

___ NEWS INTERNATIONAL
___ SEZ DEZ
___ TALKING SHOP
___ NOVEL GRAPHICS
___ FRAME TO FRAME
___ PANEL BEATERS
___ BIFF'S ILLUMINATIONS
___ ADVANCE LISTINGS
___ COMMENT
___ IN THE GUTTER
___ NETWORKS
___ COMICS ECONOMICS
___ Q AND A
___ REVIEWS
___ LETTERS
___ COMIC CUTS
___ EVENTS GUIDE
___ ADVERTISEMENTS
___ COMPETITION
___ DIRECTORY

PLUS... which of the above is your LEAST favourite, the one you skipped reading, the one you wish we'd replace with a new contender for the top spot:

_____

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Francesca Ghermandi's cartoon noir

Novel Graphics by Paul Gravett

Ghfgkhfgshmfpsgdpk`sdrsp`mcpadrsphmpfq`oghbbpmudkr

IT IS A MOONLIT evening in an enormous chateau deep in the Italian countryside. The long corridors are empty. Outside the winds moan. Alone in her cavernous bedroom, the night shadows gather around a little girl lying in her bed.

Drowsy and a bit scared, she tries shutting her eyes to sleep. Vivid images start to dance before her eyes. She can't stop visualising all the badtime bedtime stories her mother and grandmother have been telling her, with their not-so-happy endings.

The little girl's nocturnal imaginings merge with the faces and creatures she has been absorbed in all day from her much-loved comics and picture books, and the drawings she has made of her own. Sleep eventually comes, floating her on a tide of dreams to the morning.

Above: A striking piece of Ghermandi's cover artwork.

Welcome to a night in the childhood of Francesca Ghermandi, one of Italy's most talented and exuberant comics creators. Growing up in a huge house with her sculptor father and artist mother, it must have seemed as if she had a castle for her home and magicians for her parents.

From the earliest age, making art and stories became part of her everyday life and as a student making comics or 'fumetti' would be her chosen postgraduate studies. It was at Bologna's Zio Feininger comics school that she became inspired by American animation's most manic genius Tex Avery.

If anything signalled an end to the sugary sweetness swamping American cartoons under Disney it was the short, sharp sniff of Screwy Squirrel in *Screwball Squirrel* in April 1944. With this snort Screwy escorts the supposed star of the cartoon – a charming, chattering squirrel – behind a tree, where he proceeds to beat him up and then hijack the cartoon to his own ends.

Avery's sadistic, selfish squirrel personifies the sheer entertaining anarchy of seeing established order and common sense demolished. "In a cartoon everything is possible" and the same is true in Francesca's funny animal fumetti.

Helter Skelter is her cat sheriff of the future, named after the book and movie about the Charles Manson murders. His one weakness is a ravenous appetite for sardines. In this delirious 'splatter cartoon', her moral guardian is always being persecuted, either by a grinning horned devil midget or by his own criminal brother, Killer Diller, but according to the laws of cartoon physics, always bounces back unscathed for more punishment.

Francesca's first publication in English, in David Mazzucchelli's **Rubber Blanket** in 1993, led to her next series being picked up by Kim Thompson at Fantagraphics (*www.fantagraphics.com*) from 1997 for the anthology **Zero Zero** in issues 19, 20, 22 and 24.

In *Pop. 666* (as in Population 666, the cursed number), Francesca and writer Massimo Semerano invented the impoverished ghetto of San Lazzaro, described by Thompson as like, "**Palomar** on acid." No funny animals live here, but the human inhabitants are equally grotesque, obsessive and destructive.

Even at the bottom of society, there is always someone else even lower to exploit. Extortionist and sex-starved glutton Rocco terrorises the villagers by forcing them to pay taxes on 'his' land, but beneath his brutal exterior, he pines for forgotten movie starlet Hilde Historieta, now a desiccated,

aquaphobic shell. When Francesca was only eight, she was transfixed by Chester Gould's stark black and white morals in *Dick Tracy*, one of her inspirations here. The difference is that there is no square-jawed detective dispensing justice, only a godless slum, where everyone pays for their sins, including the innocent. This is true 'cartoon noir', so desperate and absurd that it becomes chillingly funny.

The tone in her three wordless *Pastil* albums (*www.seuil.com*) appears much lighter, recalling Lewis Carroll's **Alice in Wonderland**, although the world can still be threatening for this hapless heroine with a head shaped like a Tylenol tablet.

Silent comics take you back to an age before you could read words, when you could only try to make sense from what you see. They force you to read the faces and body language, to spot the clues from one panel to the next, to really look.

The effect of this is to make you feel the same sort of disorientation that Pastil is going through, heightened by the textures and atmosphere in Francesca's pencilling and shading. There is a little of Francesca in all her characters, but I think this little girl with a hyperactive imagination particularly taps into her memories and feelings from childhood.

Cartoon noir also best describes her latest 80-page large-format colour album **The Wipeout**, also from Fantagraphics. Francesca's cast of misfits may look like cute advertising mascots and cartoon figurines, but their passions are all too sordidly human.

Meet hen-pecked husband Jim Tartaglia, a big-nosed, overly flexible, die-cut silhouette. He's a poorly paid, absent-minded chemist, who easily lapses into erotic nightmares, when he's not busy refining his revolutionary all-purpose cleaner.

No wonder, when all his bald beachball wife Bawl yearns for are the latest hair transplants, way beyond their means.

Their stagnating marriage reaches breaking point when Jimbo falls in love with dishy brunette Virgin Prunes upstairs. When they accidentally discover that Jim's cleaner mixed with milk literally wipes people out, erasing every identifiable trace, Virgin lures Jim into using it to murder a blackmailing loan shark.

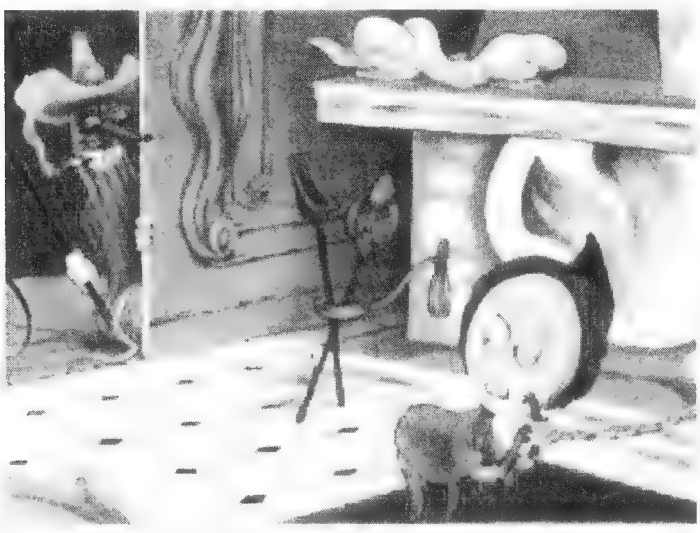
But in true femme fatale tradition, her motives are far more devious. Since Jim is the same shape as her husband, Virgin and Bawl plot together to wipe Jim out and pass his blank corpse off as that of Mr Prunes so they can split his life insurance.

In this dizzying maelstrom of desire and deceit, part *Double Indemnity*, part *Mulholland Drive*, you need your wits about you to distinguish dream from reality, present from past or future, truth from lies.

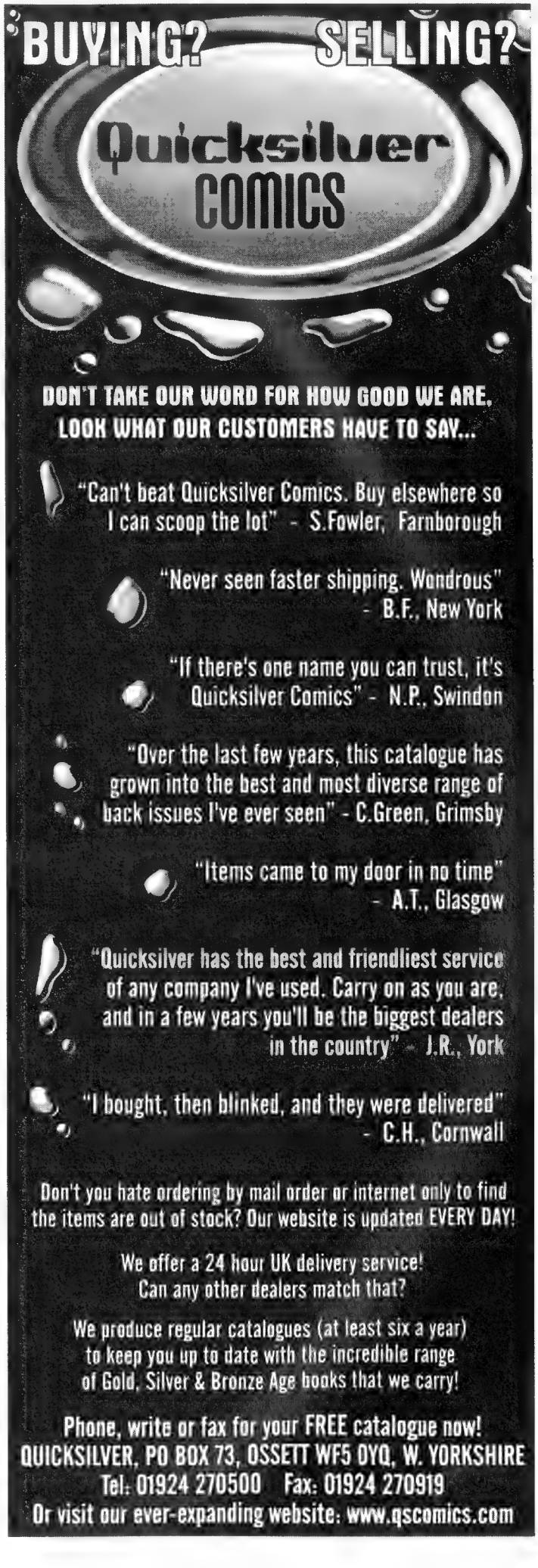
Francsca's hardboiled fantasia dazzles in its lustrous palette, harking back to vintage Disney cels and Sixties Italian advertising illustration. Like the rollercoaster on the cover, its spiralling illogic rattles around the tracks of your mind, long after you have woken up yourself.

Francesca has a major gallery exhibition currently showing in the Museum of Illustration in Ferrara, Italy and new strips appearing in the Graphic Classics collection of Ambrose Bierce adaptations and **The Comics Journal's 2004 Special**. In her two-page strip she is auditioning a new character, an *Addams Family*-style skeletal figure who looks set to be the actor in another album now on her drawing board.

Francesca is back in her bedroom in the chateau. It's getting dark, it's time to go to sleep, time to close your eyes and dream...



Above: A disturbing and surreal example of Ghermandi's comic strip work.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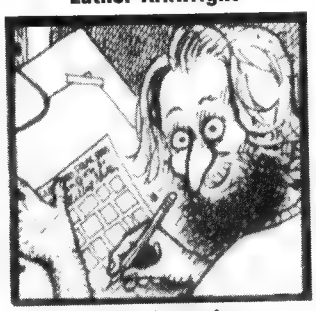
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Above and beyond the call of duty...

Talking Shop with Stephen Holland

Reminding people there's a real mainstream out there

SO YOU'RE the local Virgin Megastore manager and you've just secured a rare appearance by David Beckham and Posh Spice to sign at your store. How do you treat them?

At the very least you offer them a lavish rider (that's food, drink and any other whimsical desires/conditions that occurred to them woozily that morning), full travel costs and a multi-digit appearance fee. A decent chill area, heavy security and a huge publicity campaign would also seem to be the minimal orders of the day.

Now you're the owner of a comic shop and, contrary to your wildest dreams, you've just secured a signing by one of the top comicbook creators of the day. How do you treat them? You'd be surprised.

One of the first creators who came to our assistance was Bryan Talbot, illustrator of **Sandman**, sole creator of two **Luther Arkwright** books and the brilliantly pitched, beautifully rendered and cleverly marketed **A Tale of One Bad Rat**.

For those readers who've yet to buy that book, it's the story of a young girl who is forced out of her home and onto the streets by the abuse of her father. From there she discovers enough courage to make her way to the Lake District, home of her heroine Beatrix Potter, tell her own story as an homage to the woman and confront her past head-on. It's a powerful read, I promise you.

Nine years ago that was our first big break, the book we knew we could bring to the real mainstream (those who enjoy BBC drama, etc) and sell by the hundreds. Bryan very kindly agreed to sign with us for an afternoon, even though we were virtually unheard of at the time.

After an afternoon of exquisite rat sketches and one particularly gratifying sale to a very old lady who recognised the watercoloured landscapes, we retired to a restaurant for a meal of good food and fine wine.

Bryan told us the most shocking story: about how a comicbook chain store had invited him to sign (which he did of course in his immaculately professional manner) only to offer as his reward... a trip to the local McDonalds. No really, you're laughing, but it's true.

I was corresponding with Bryan the other month, when he told me: "Some comics shop owners don't seem to realise that when you do a signing, you're losing one or two days' work and somehow think that supplying your travel and accommodation expenses is paying for your time, which you're giving freely in order to promote your work, promote their store and meet the readers. In return, I expect a restaurant meal and at least a couple of freebies. I did one signing where, after the event, I was taken to a shopworker's flat and fed a tasteless vegetarian brown rice mush. I've been in a store where, after signing and doing free sketches for customers and staff all afternoon, I've picked up a two-dollar comic and been charged for it! I never do those sorts of stores again.

> "...After the event, I was taken to a shopworker's flat and fed a tasteless vegetarian brown rice mush." – Bryan Talbot

"One of the worst things, that happens quite often, is that you turn up to find that the store has done next to nothing to advertise the event. They've perhaps put some leaflets on the counter the week before and wonder why only a half dozen people have showed up. This has even happened to me at big-name London comic stores.

"Another is when your signing coincides with a new comic and the store doesn't think to get copies of your previous work in! D'oh! It happens!"

Yes it does. I am, like you, at a loss for words. But unfortunately I've heard worse. 10 years ago, when Jim Valentino was writing and drawing **Shadowhawk**, I was hanging around the London comicbook convention organised by that grand British institution, Frank Plowright, editor of the excellent **Slings & Arrows** guide to comics. There I bumped into a retailing couple from Liverpool who excitedly boasted that they were having Jim round to sign. Now, I've nothing but respect for Mr. Valentino, but **Shadowhawk** sold precisely three copies an issue in our old store, so, baffled, I asked them how many issues they sold.

"About the same," they confessed. "We just want to meet him ourselves." There go those words again! Posh and Becks don't sign for free, nor do film or TV stars, but the best comics creators do. They just want to reward loyal and potential readers with a personal appearance and sketch for free. A sketch. For free!

Here's a more inspirational story: Neil Gaiman's signing for us during his *Neverwhere* days. It was filming at the BBC, his time was very much in demand and he could have spent it more profitably and conveniently in London that month. But for some odd reason (which Bryan Talbot and Dave Sim may have played some part in), the knight in ebony armour offered to come and spend the day with us.

Neil held court for several hours, charming the pants off his obsidian hoards and desecrating (sorry – adding his own, individual, golden enhancements to) Dave McKean's **Sandman** covers. And when that was finally over, Mark, Dominique, Neil and I retired upstairs with a couple of his friends, where we prepared to thank Neil for his selfless time and bid him *adieu*.

"Pop the kettle on," said Neil, who then proceeded to sign every single one of his works we still had in stock, because he knew we'd then be able to sell them faster. Ladies and gentlemen, we have heroes in our midst!

The creators of the works you admire so fervently are, of course, just ordinary human beings, and all those I know would like to be treated as such. But that sort of generosity and humility should not be taken for granted, because it rarely occurs in any other industry.

***Next:** It's time for a secret origin.*

*Stephen Holland and Mark Simpson, co-own Nottingham's Page 45. They organised the entire **Cerebus** UK Tour '93, from which Page 45 was born.*

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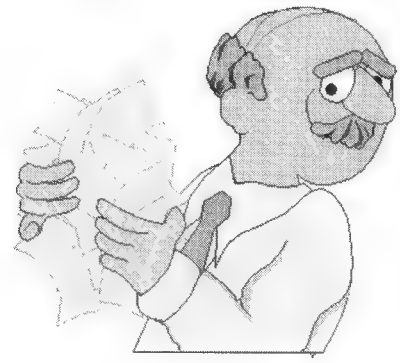

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Fantastic Four (1st series) #1-400
Journey into Mystery #83-125
Batman #150-300
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Detective Comics #300–500
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We are also looking for runs of – Spawn/Authority/Cable/Catwoman/Thunderbolts and many others. Please contact us on 020 7836 5630 if you have any of the titles listed.

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Advance Listings

READERS: You can use this Advance Listings *section as an order form with your direct market store or mail order supplier. Simply mark the items you require, copy or remove these pages (or list them on a separate piece of paper) and give it to your supplier, together with a note of your name, address and phone number to guarantee not missing any of the new titles being published. Certain suppliers may not accept standing orders, so check with them first. All prices of US titles listed are in dollars. Import prices are usually converted at a rate of $1.00 = 85p UK sterling. Shipping dates given are the earliest date product will reach stores. All dates, prices and information are assumed to be accurate as provided by publishers.*

Compiled by Jim Hannah

The following are 32 page colour titles unless stated

ON SALE FROM
MAY 5

Dark Horse

3x3 Eyes Vol 8: Descent of the Mystic City (Yuzo Takada; tpbk) With the mission accomplished, the return to Kunlun turns out not to be the heartfelt reunion Pai had hoped for, but could instead reveal her incredible journey to be only a ruse that could well release the evil Kaiyan Wang from imprisonment in the Sacred Land! Collecting stories from Super Manga Blast! #32-40. Mature readers. 288pg b&w $18.95

B.P.R.D.: A Plague of Frogs 3 (Mike Mignola & Guy Davis) While Roger hangs lifeless, the other members of the Bureau for Paranormal Research and Defense recover from their helicopter crash only to see Johann torn to shreds by the town's only inhabitants. .. $2.99

The Goon Vol 2: My Murderous Childhood (And Other Grievous Yarns; Eric Powell; tpbk) Find out how the Goon and Franky became best pals, and how they muscled their way into the rackets of big-time crime-boss, Labrazio – who, incidentally, nobody's seen in a while. Collects issues #1-4 of the Dark Horse series, plus *The Brothers Mud.* 128pg $13.95

Oh My Goddess! 108 *(Sora Unchained* 4 of 8; Kosuke Fujishima) With the future of the Nekomi Tech Motor Club's leadership in question, Sora faces one of the greatest challenges of her cute, shy life – cart racing! b&w $2.99

new **Spyboy: Final Exam** 1 (of 4; Peter David & Pop Mhan) This is it boys and girls! It's the series where everything happens! SpyBoy comes face to face with his greatest challenges ever – his senior prom, his graduation from high school ... and the revelation as to the truth about his mother! All this while going up against his greatest opponent ever – Spyguy! $2.99

Star Wars: Empire 21 (Ron Marz & Tomás Giorello) Against Luke's better judgment, Leia has sought the help of an old boyfriend from Alderaan in finding a new location for the Rebel base. $2.99

one-shot **Van Helsing** (Joshua Dysart & J. Alexander) *See Close-Up, right.*

DC Comics

Batman: City of Light 8 (of 8; The Pander Brothers + Mark Paniccia & The Pander Brothers + Alvaro Lopez) Batman is face-to-face with the Purge, and with the fate of Gotham resting in his hands! Does the newly reborn Dark Knight have what it takes to rid the city of its greatest threat? $2.95

Detective Comics 794 (Andersen Gabrych + A.J. Lieberman & various) Can Batman stop a terrible blight from wiping out the citizens of Gotham? And will his quest bring him into conflict with a beautiful but deadly vigilante from Blüdhaven? 40pg $2.95

Enginehead 2 (of 8; Joe Kelly & Ted Mckeever) Now the six are one, the age-old question rears its ugly head: "Why am I here?" Witness as the bizarre construct of steel and humanity struggles to discover its mission in life. ... $2.50

one-shot **The Filth** (Grant Morrison & Chris Weston + Gary Erskine; *Vertigo;* tpbk) This 13 issue series is collected in one volume. A heady brew of big ideas, exotic locales and bizarre action, featuring some of the wildest imagery in all of comics, including prosthetically outfitted dolphins in scuba gear and a hard-smoking chimpanzee in Kremlin garb. Mature readers. 320pg $19.95

new **Firestorm** 1 (Dan Jolley & ChrisCross + John Dell) Jason Rusch has his hands full as a teenager dealing with an abusive dad and a local criminal for whom he unwisely agreed to do a job. But things are going to get a lot more complicated once he's granted the powers of Firestorm! $2.50

Hard Time 4 (Steve Gerber & Brian Hurtt) Young prison inmate Ethan Harrow's mysterious power is gaining strength, skill, and even a physical form, exiting his body and slipping from cell to cell as he sleeps at night. $2.50

Justice League Adventures 31 (Josh Siegal & Chris Jones + Dan Davis) A child's life is struck by tragedy, and the Justice League must help him face the future. $2.25

Looney Tunes 114 (Sholly Fisch & Omar Aranda + Alberto Saichann) Take a wild ride through the history of ACME products, from cream-pie-throwing biplanes to joy-buzzer salesmen, starring the whole Looney Tunes gang! .. $2.25

Mad Magazine 442 (The Usual Gang Of Idiots) Pick up this issue of MAD for a belly full of US-style laughs. 48pg $3.50

The Monolith 4 (Jimmy Palmiotti + Justin Gray & Phil Winslade) Something ancient and sinister lurks beneath Journey's End Cemetery, while a mysterious priest hunts the undead through the back alleys of Brooklyn. $2.95

Plastic Man 6 *(Eel O'Brien on the Lam* 6 of 6; Kyle Baker) The real conclusion to the story, allegedly. $2.95

Robotech: Invasion 5 (of 5; Jay Faerber + Ken Siu-Chong & Takeshi Miyazawa + Omar Dogan; *WildStorm)* Lancer must weigh the price of loyalty and love in a confrontation that will force him to re-evaluate his crusade against the Invid. $2.95

The Sandman Presents: Thessaly – Witch For Hire 4 (of 4; Bill Willingham & Shawn Mcmanus; *Vertigo)* Calmly sipping tea, Thessaly waits as the hideous Chaos beast approaches, leaving a path of destruction and mayhem in its wake. Mature readers. $2.95

Superman: Birthright 10 (of 12; Mark Waid & Leinil Yu + Gerry Alanguilan) Faced with the knowledge of what Lex Luthor has planned for Metropolis, Clark Kent is ready to throw in the towel and head back to Smallville. $2.95

Swamp Thing 3 (Andy Diggle & Enriqué Breccia; *Vertigo)* Tefé is reluctant to embrace the godlike destiny which Sargon has promised her – until she discovers the wonders of the morphogenic field, otherwise known as The Red, where all flesh is one. Mature readers. $2.95

T.H.U.N.D.E.R. Agents Archives Vol 4 (Wally Wood + Steve Skeates & various; hbk) Collecting Thunder Agents #11, Noman #1-2, and Dynamo 3! NoMan faces an Egyptian succubus, S.P.I.D.E.R. assassins, time-travelling aliens, the Last Subterranean and more. 216pg $49.95

Wildcats Version 3.0 #21 (Joe Casey & Duncan Rouleau + John Dell; *WildStorm)* Grifter's team of operatives is assembled in Europe, but will they be too late to save Zealot before she's tortured to death by the Coda order? Mature readers. $2.95

Y: The Last Man 22 *(Widow's Pass* 2 of 3; Brian K. Vaughan & Goran Parlov + José Marzan Jr; *Vertigo)* It's guns, alcohol, and a monkey as the last man on Earth's standoff with the female survivors of an Arizona militia group continues. Mature readers. $2.95

Marvel

Alpha Flight 3 *(You Gotta Be Kiddin' Me* 3 of 6; Scott Lobdell & Clayton Henry) Will Canada's newest, hippest fighting force be able to save their maple-leaf-clad forefathers in time? $2.99

Captain America & The Falcon 3 *(Two Americas* 3 of 4; Christopher Priest & Bart Sears) Ordered to find and capture the Falcon, Captain America follows in his closest friend's footsteps as he seeks to uncover the true reason why the authorities want the Falcon in custody. $2.99

Exiles 46 *(Earn Your Wings* 1 of 3; Tony Bedard & Mizuki Sakakibara) After the devastating events of their last mission, the Exiles hope for a little downtime, only to find themselves ported directly into a none-too-friendly reception from the regular Marvel Universe. $2.99

Marvel Age Fantastic Four 2 (Sean McKeever & Makoto Nakatsuka) Discover the devious plan of the Skrulls from outer space in this modern retelling of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby's classic. $2.25

Marvel Age Spider-Man 3 (Daniel Quantz & Jonboy Meyers) The Sandman oozes through the web of Spider-Man, and Spidey is unmasked by his most dangerous foe yet! $2.25

Spider-Girl 73 (Tom DeFalco & Ron Frenz + Pat Olliffe) Spider-Girl's hunt for the new Doctor Octopus is sidetracked by Claw, the Cat, a high-tech villain who's faster, stronger, and more agile than our girl! $2.99

Spider-Man Unlimited 3 (various) A young man must grapple with a life-altering choice in *Preventative Medicine* by Tom McLaughlin and Scott Kolins. $2.99

Thanos 10 (Keith Giffep & Ron Lim) It's Thanos vs the Maker in a cosmic brawl that answers the oft-asked question: Quisp or Quake? $2.99

Thor 78 (Dan Jurgens & Scott Eaton(Will the devastating attack of Desak, Destroyer of Gods, on the empire Thor has built unite the Odinson and his son, Magni? $2.99

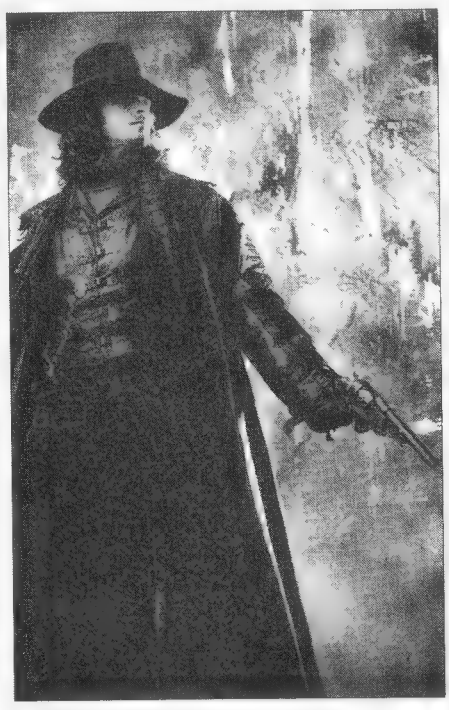
Thor Vol 5: The Reigning (Dan Jurgens & Scott Eaton; tpbk) The day of man is over. Now is the time of gods on Earth. A character from the present is thrust into the future to witness the brave new world Thor has built atop the ruins of human society. Is it a utopia, or a totalitarian state? Collects Thor #68-74. 168pg $17.99

Ultimate Spider-Man 58 *(Hollywood* 5 of 6; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) As the cameras roll, the real web-slinger is beaten by Doc Ock and hijacked by plane to Brazil! $2.25

Ultimate Spider-Man Vol 8 (Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley; tpbk) Sam Bullit is running for Mayor of New York City on an anti-Spider-Man campaign, and Daily Bugle Editor-in-Chief J. Jonah Jameson is backing him 100%. But who's pulling Bullit's strings? Collects Ultimate Spider-Man #47-53. 184pg $17.99

Uncanny X-Men 444 *(The End of History* 1 of 4; Chris Claremont & Alan Davis) New alliances are forged as old friendships are rekindled, but one thing is certain: The X-Men will never be the same! $2.25

Uncanny X-Men Vol 5 (Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca; tpbk) A poignant tale about a young human and a young mutant falling in love, and what terrible consequences it will have not only for them, but for their family and friends. Collects Uncanny X-Men #437-441. 120pg $11.99



close-up

Van Helsing

Dark Horse Comics

Writer: Joshua Dysart

Artists: J. Alexander

In a world where monsters inhabit man's deepest nightmares, evil has one person to fear: legendary monster hunter Van Helsing. This is a stand-alone precursor to a new horror series, inspired by the forthcoming motion picture. Van Helsing is in Paris investigating a series of brutal mutilations. He confronts a mad doctor whose bizarre experiments have created a horrifying creature that dwells in the sewer system. $2.99

ON SALE MAY 5

ON SALE FROM
MAY 12

Dark Horse

one-shot **Blade of the Immortal** 89 *(Crossroads;* Hiroaki Samura) With their flight towards Edo interrupted by Anotsu's illness, will Rin finally take this opportunity to end his life, or will she wind up defending it? Mature readers. b&w $2.99

Cannon God Exaxxion Stage 3 (Kenichi Sonoda; tpbk) Kano is a typical Tokyo teenager, except that he pilots a state-of-the-art integrated gunsuit + the antimatter-powered, cannon-toting, mega-robot Exaxxion + he may be humankind's last hope against colonising

aliens. Other than that, he's just your absolutely typical teen. Collecting issues 14-20 of the series. 224pg b&w $15.95

Freaks of the Heartland 3 (Steve Niles & Greg Ruth) The parents begin killing their mutant horde, but when Will's father comes to kill him, monstrous violence and occult powers break out, and the true nature of the freaks of the heartland becomes an even deeper mystery. $2.99

one-shot **The Invincible Ed** (Ryan Woodward; tpbk) A geek at Chesterton High, Ed mistakenly receives the alien power of invincibility but to his horror, being a superhero just hurts like hell! Collects the miniseries 112pg $13.95

new **Last Train To Deadsville: A Cal McDonald Mystery** 1 (Steve Niles & Kelley Jones) Supernatural private dick Cal McDonald goes on his weirdest adventure yet, when a teenage, mulleted weirdo from suburbia takes his occult fantasies a little too far. $2.99

The Ring Vol 2 (Takashi Hiroshi & Meimu; tpbk) The Ring takes a side step from the plot of the original Japanese film, taking the reader into life after all that tragedy and mystery. And guess what? Sadako, the psychic killer, isn't so easily disposed of. Mature readers. 192pg b&w $13.95

Star Wars: Clone Wars Vol 4: Light and Dark (John Ostrander & Jan Duursema + Dan Parsons, tpbk) The Jedi are taught to use the Force for good. But the dark side can be a dangerous temptation to even the strongest Jedi, as Aayla Secura learns when she battles former Jedi-in-training Aurra Sing. 136pg $16.95

one-shot **Tim Biskup's 100 Paintings Book** (Tim Biskup; hbk) Presents Biskup's work in its actual size, with an introduction by illustrator and Emmy winner, Gary Baseman. 112pg $14.95

DC Comics

Action Comics 815 (Chuck Austen & Ivan Reis + Marc Campos) Superman battles for his life – and those of the Teen Titans – against a foe fuelled by an unholy rage! $2.50

Aquaman 18 (Will Pfeifer & Patrick Gleason + Christian Alamy) Just as Aquaman discovers that the disaster that sunk San Diego was caused deliberately, he and Lorena are attacked by a man-made sea beast sent to prevent anyone from learning the truth. .. $2.50

Batman 627 (Judd Winick & Dustin Nguyen + Richard Friend) The Penguin has teamed up with the Scarecrow to slice off a big piece of Gotham's underworld. Can Batman and Robin possibly stop this unholy alliance? $2.25

Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight 179 (A.J. Lieberman & Greg Scott) From their debut in Japan to the real reasons behind why they're in Gotham City, learn the secrets behind Batman's newest foes. $2.50

Bite Club 2 (of 6; Howard Chaykin + David Tischman & David Hahn; *Vertigo)* Leto Del Toro, the first vampire priest in history, has just inherited the family business. But can a son of the church make his dead father proud by running Miami's nastiest crime cartel? Mature. $2.95

one-shot **Empire** (Mark Waid & Barry Kitson + James Pascoe, tpbk) Looks at the world through the eyes of a dictator scheming to maintain his tenuous grasp over an entire planet. Reprints Empire #0-6 plus a five-page preview and a sketchbook section. Mature readers. 208pg $14.95

Fables 25 (Bill Willingham & Mark Buckingham + Steve Leialoha; *Vertigo)* Bigby arrives at the farm in upstate New York only to be greeted gun-first by an army of wooden soldiers. Mature. $2.50

Fallen Angel 11 (Peter David & David Lopez + Fernando Blanco) As Black Mariah hovers near death, the Fallen Angel has her final confrontation with Wilde. Mature readers. $2.95

Gotham Central 19 (Ed Brubaker & Michael Lark + Stefano Gaudiano) Driver finds himself in the middle of a hostage situation that quickly turns deadly, leaving him and Josie Mac with more questions than answers. .. $2.50

Green Arrow 38 *(City Walls* 5 of 6; Judd Winick & Phil Hester + Ande Parks) Demon hordes have overrun Star City. Batman faces innumerable obstacles trying to break through the mystical barrier surrounding the city. $2.50

A Gregory Treasury Vol 2 (Marc Hempel; tpbk) Collecting the third and fourth volumes of Marc Hempel's series into a single book. Gregory is placed in a foster home that's more dysfunctional than the asylum. Mature readers. 144pg b&w $9.95

H-E-R-O 16 (Will Pfeifer & Dale Eaglesham + Wade Von Grawbadger) Robby Reed, who used the H-E-R-O device years ago, follows the trail of bodies in the killer's wake, hoping he can stop the superpowered maniac. .. $2.50

JLA 98 (John Byrne + Chris Claremont & Byrne + Jerry Ordway) The horrified JLA learns about the vampire coven's genocidal plans! Could it be that the World's Greatest Super-Heroes are no match for this growing evil tide? $2.25

JSA 61 (Geoff Johns & Don Kramer + Tom Mandrake) As the dead continue to rise, the JSA is faced with a horrible decision on how to stop them. $2.50

MAD XL 27 (The Usual Gang Of Idiots) Another jam-packed issue of MAD XL contains the Best of the Web, MAD Marginals XL, and a featured Writer of the Month. 96pg $4.99

Nightwing 93 (Devin Grayson & Patrick Zircher + Andy Owens) The final chapter in the year-long saga that has seen Nightwing lose his job, his love, his home and several of his closest friends. $2.25

one-shot **Orbiter** (Warren Ellis & Colleen Doran; *Vertigo)* When a space shuttle crash lands on Earth after being missing for a decade, it unlocks a mystery that will unfold deep in outer space. Can a team of three specialists cheated out of their dream of spaceflight discover the nature of this bizarre space-borne anomaly? Mature. 104pg $17.95

Scooby-Doo 84 (various) A ghost-loving town is haunted by its own founder – a vengeful pirate! Plus, Scooby and Shaggy get into a scrape involving spies and secret sauce at a creepy burger joint! $2.25

Stormwatch: Team Achilles 22 (Micah Ian Wright & Clement Sauve; *WildStorm)* Santini and Team Achilles reluctantly travel to Africa to help out their new ally, Giant, aka The Hallibastard. Mature readers. ... $2.95

Teen Titans 11 *(Raven Rising* 3 of 4; Geoff Johns & Mike Mckone + Marlo Alquiza) It's up to Raven and the last standing Titan to save their team-mates from Brother Blood's clutches. But with Deathstroke and the Ravager in their way, along with hundreds of Brother Blood cult members, it looks like the bloodletting has only begun. $2.50

one-shot **Terra Obscura** (Alan Moore + Peter Hogan & Yanick Paquette + Karl Story; *America's Best Comics;* tpbk) How would you adjust to the world if you'd been frozen for 30 years? That's the problem the heroes of Terra Obscura have faced. But now a threat unlike anything they've seen before is spreading across the United States – a mysterious plague spreading like a cancer, making all technology useless and reverting mankind back to the Stone Age. 160pg $14.95

Touch 2 (John Francis Moore & Wes Craig + Prentis Rollins) This month, the focus shifts to Rory's shifty manager Cooper, who has his own problems including a lawsuit and a superpowered stalker! $2.50

Marvel

4 #6 *(The Pine Barrens* 2 of 3; Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa & Steve McNiven) A family camping trip to the pristine Pine Barrens takes a terrifying twist when a group of extraterrestrial terrors turn their hungry eyes on the most powerful family on the planet! $2.99

Avengers 82 *(Once An Invader* .. 1 of 3; Chuck Austen & Scott Kolins) Who is the mysterious figure that claims to be Captain America, and what mission is he recruiting the super-soldiers of past wars to accomplish? $2.25

Captain America 26 (Robert Morales & Chris Bachalo) The Bucky Issue resurfaces, as Cap must answer for his World War II history with young Bucky Barnes fighting by his side. $2.99

new **District X** #1 *(Mr M* 1 of 6; David Hine & David Yardin) Welcome to Mutant Town, the dark corner of New York City where the long arm of the law has been severed clean. Here, the mutant population doesn't sport GQ style or champagne dreams. They exe out each day in squalid tenement rows and filthy streets where only one man and one law can be trusted: the X-Man Bishop. $2.99

Emma Frost 11 *(Mind Games* 5 of 6, Karl Bollers & Carlo Pagulayan) Emma Frost has freed herself from her overbearing father, but now she's on her own and in over her head with the Boston mob! .. $2.99

Essential X-Men Vol 5 (Chris Claremont & various; tpbk) The X-Men go up against the Juggernaut, Doctor Doom and the Hellfire Club's newest recruits, the Hellions – and team up with the Avengers, Spider-Man and Power Pack. Collects Uncanny X-Men #180-198 and X-Men Annual #7-8. 576pg b&w $16.99

new **Excalibur** 1 (Chris Claremont & Igor Kordey) Genosha was once a thriving nation of mutants, built from the ground up by Magneto. Then, one day an apocalyptic attack killed every man, woman and child, and reduced an entire society to rubble within hours. Now, Professor Charles Xavier has come to Genosha with one intention: to rebuild a nation from its ashes. $2.99

Incredible Hulk 72 (Bruce Jones & Mike Deodato Jr) The Hulk squares off against the invincible Iron Man. . $2.25

Iron Fist 3 (Jim Mullaney & Kevin Lau) With Iron Fist gone, it's Danny Rand who finds himself thrust to the front lines in a centuries-old conflict. $2.99

Iron Man 81 *(The Deep End* 3 of 4; John Jackson Miller & Philip Tan + Jorge Lucas) Only Iron Man can stop Vitriol from killing millions, but he's got no defence against her. As Vitriol's threats escalate to their terrifying potential, a face from Iron Man's past arrives on the scene. Not to help – but to rip Tony Stark's head off! $2.99

Mystique 14 *(Unnatural* 1 of 5 Sean McKeever & Manuel Garcia) When Mystique is sent to Europe to investigate a biotech company rumoured to be using mutants as guinea pigs, she discovers a mystery far greater than anything she'd imagined! $2.99

The Pulse 3 *(Thin Air* 3 of 5; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) Spider-Man joins forces with Jessica Jones, Ben Urich and Kat Farrell to bring the Green Goblin to justice! $2.99

Illuminations

Highlights from May's releases

Selected by Martin "Biff" Averre

I don't normally like miniseries, but the release from DC of **The Authority: More Kev** #1 (of 4) has 'sales success' and 'great story' stamped all over it. Garth Ennis – both a fan favourite and a man at the top of his craft – is scripting and Glenn Fabry is on art, so quality is assured. Couple this with the success of the previous one-shot (**The Authority: Kev**) which gives this miniseries 'history' and you have a winner. Okay, I love The Authority too, so I am a bit biased.

Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5

Starsky and Hutch opens, and at the same time DC goes retro too, first by releasing **Firestorm** #1 – a series originally cancelled at #100 in August 1990. Like the revived *Starsky and Hutch* with new actors, this series has a new central character, Jason, who by accident of fate becomes the new Firestorm. So, we have the same powers, different personality. Will this be enough to make it work? Well, Dan Jolley on scripts and ChrisCross with John Dell on art have the skill, but only time will tell. My gut reaction is middle of the road and maybe 24 issues. **Sales 3/5 Quality 4/5**

Secondly, it is the 'return of the dragon'. Yes, **Richard Dragon Kung Fu Fighter**. Now this really is from the same era as *Starsky and Hutch*, last seeing print with #18 in December 1977. This will either be a surprise smash hit or flop after a handful of issues. Chuck Dixon is scripting and has a great fondness for the character so his heart will really be in this. But my concern is over Scott McDaniel's art, which can be fine, but is not in my mind suited to martial arts. It just doesn't have the required dynamics. **Sales 2/5 Quality 3/5**

Top seller from DC, certainly in US dollars, will be **Justice League of America: Another Nail**. The original *Elseworlds* miniseries (**JLA: The Nail**) did really well and provides a 'history' and continuity that will possibly make this follow up an even bigger success. The creative team is the same as from the first series – Alan Davis and Mark Farmer – a dynamic duo that produces top seller after top seller. This cosmic tale of gods, monsters, villains and alien worlds will be eagerly awaited. Don't under order or forget to reserve your copy of number 1. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

Marvel's answer to this is **X-Men Reload**: four new series and six new story arcs begin. Now the first reaction is to say: "Seen this before, nothing new will happen. What differences will this make?" Actually there will be massive sales on at least one of the new series and all through the X-titles there will be a boost in sales, maybe short lived, but still worth catering for. Top of the charts will be **Astonishing X-Men** #1, written by Joss Whedon and drawn by John Cassady. This is all the news that Marvel gives, but it will still be massive. There will be a variant cover to #1 which, creatively by Marvel, a retailer can only order based on his purchase of the lowest order of the four new titles in the ratio of one per 10 copies. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

The other three titles, in order of my view of sales success are: **Excalibur** #1 – Chris Claremont chronicles the story of Professor X as he rebuilds Genosha. **New X-Men: Academy X** – which is really **New Mutants** revamped, then lastly **District X**, where Bishop is the law in keeping the mutant population under control in New York. My overview of the sales success of these is still high. **Sales 5/5 Quality 5/5**

With 21 years of comic retail experience as Ace Comics, Biff has also produced his ***Illuminations*** *monthly fanzine for 19 years before moving it to the web.*

She-Hulk 3 (Dan Slott & Juan Bobillo) Can a ghost testify at his own murder trial? It's another bizarre case of Superhuman Law for the lawyers at She-Hulk's new firm. $2.99

Spectacular Spider-Man 14 (Paul Jenkins & Paolo Rivera) On a rooftop in the Bronx sits a sad handicapped man. A prisoner of his own crippled body, how will a battle between the wall-crawler and Morbius, the Living Vampire, change his life? $2.25

Spider-Man 2 (Mark Millar & Terry Dodson) With his secret identity exposed, a madman threatening to destroy his family and enemies at every turn, Spider-Man pays a visit to Earth's Mightiest Heroes – the Avengers – for some assistance. $2.99

Supreme Power 10 (J. Michael Straczynski & Gary Frank; *MAX Comics)* Introducing Power Princess: Who is this mysterious woman? And what does her appearance mean for Hyperion? Mature readers. $2.99

Thor: Son of Asgard 4 *(The Warriors Teen* 4 of 6; Akira Yoshida & Greg Tocchini) As Thor, Sif and Balder continue their quest, emotions run high between the troubled teens, and the cracks in their friendship continue to widen. $2.99

Ultimate X-Men 45 (Brian Michael Bendis & David Finch) A final battle between the X-Men and the Sentinels in the heart of Washington DC. How will the not-so-merry mutants deal with the awful aftermath? $2.25

Venom 14 *(Twist* 1 of 5; Daniel Way & Young) It's symbiote vs symbiote as two bloodthirsty Venom creatures go head-to-head – with Spider-Man caught in the middle of it all. $2.99

one-shot **Venom Vol 1: Shiver** (Daniel Way & Francisco Herrera; tpbk) Venom has popped up near the Arctic Circle, leaving a trail of dead bodies in his wake. Now able to change human hosts in the blink of an eye, he's on the run from mysterious clandestine forces – each with their own agenda for the deadly, elusive alien. Collects Venom 1-5. 120pg $13.99

Weapon X #23 *(War of the Programs* 1 of 3; Frank Tieri & Tom Mandrake) What is the Weapon X Program? What is its relationship to the shadowy past of the most famous X-Man, Wolverine? And what did Wolverine recently learn about himself that threatens to destroy everything he believes in? $2.99

ON SALE FROM

MAY 19

Dark Horse

El Zombo 2 (of 3; Kevin Munroe & Dave Wilkins) Investigating his own murder after hours, Zombo comes face to face with the man responsible for his bullet holes – and inadvertently endangers Beli! $2.99

new **Grendel: Devil's Reign** 1 (Matt Wagner & Tim Sale) The year is 2530, and the corrupt Church has fallen. Continent-wide social upheaval following the collapse of Vatican Ouest's tower in Colorado is compounded by the spreading infestation of vampires – victims of a savage new plague. Ex-COP leader Pellon Cross is still at large, and Eppy Thatcher is nowhere to be found. Mature. $3.50

Oh My Goddess! Vol 18: The Phantom Racer (Kosuke Fujishima; tpbk) Motorcycle mania has got the better of Megumi, Keiichi Morisato's little sister and college student. Driven to be the best biker around, she decides to test her skill against the Phantom Racer, a ghostly apparition that sometimes appears on a dark stretch of country road. 256pg b&w $17.99

Steve Rude's The Moth 2 (Steve Rude & Gary Martin) American Liberty returns, and with her charming personality captures the heart of everyone in the circus. $2.99

one-shot **Tony Millionaire's Sock Monkey: Uncle Gabby** (Tony Millionaire; tpbk) The Sock Monkey returns home from the University where he has become a Master Poet dedicated to the Science of Un-naming Objects. He embarks on a journey of sentimentality as he rediscovers his childhood home. 40pg $14.95

new **Trigun Maximum Vol 1: The Hero Returns** (Yasuhiro Nightow; tpbk) Vash the Stampede disappeared for two years after blasting a crater onto the moon above the desert planet he saved from annihilation. But with good people and bad alike trying to track him down, he won't stay lost for long! Mature readers. 192pg b&w $13.95

DC Comics

Adventures of Superman 628 (Greg Rucka & Matthew Clark + Nelson) Superman and Green Lantern encounter a mystery in space that will reveal a new threat to the Man of Steel! $2.50

The Authority 12 (Robbie Morrison & Dwayne Turner + Sal Regla; *WildStorm)* Yielding to international pressure, the Authority allows the reunion of Jenny Quantum and her estranged mother aboard the Carrier. Mature. $2.95

Batman Adventures 14 (Ty Templeton + Dan Slott & Rick Burchett + Terry Beatty) Batman's childhood idol goes missing while filming the new Gray Ghost movie. Is something sinister afoot? $2.25

Batman: Gotham Knights 53 (A.J. Lieberman & Al Barrionuevo + Francis Portela) One of the deadliest villains from Batman's past has returned, one so powerful he's even gone toe-to-toe with the JLA. 40pg $2.95

one-shot **Batman/Superman/Wonder Woman: Trinity** (Matt Wagner, hbk) Witness the first meeting of three DC icons as they join forces to combat Ra's al Ghul and his mad quest to remake the world in his own terrible image! 208pg $24.95

Birds of Prey 67 *(Sensei and Student* 6 of 6, Gail Simone & Ed Benes + Alex Lei) All the answers are revealed as Black Canary assembles a strike team of the world's deadliest women to rescue Oracle! $2.50

Fraction 2 (David Tischman & Timothy Green II) In the wake of a disastrous robbery committed with their stolen battlesuit, the bond between childhood friends starts to break. $2.50

Hawkman 28 (Jimmy Palmiotti + Justin Gray & Ryan Sook + Mick Gray) When Hawkman is powerless to stop the brutal murder of an innocent woman, he becomes haunted by countless memories of Hawkgirl's various deaths. $2.50

Human Target 10 (Peter Milligan & Cliff Chiang; *Vertigo)* Chance impersonates an old friend who's just escaped from prison and plans to lure the police away from him so the convict can have five nights alone with his beautiful wife. Mature readers .. $2.95

new **Justice League of America: Another Nail** 1 (of 3, Alan Davis & Davis + Mark Farmer; *Elseworlds)* The JLA comes to terms with its newest recruit – Superman – and faces a sprawling adventure that catapults them to other worlds, other dimensions, other eras, and even the mystical realms that lead to Hell itself! 48pg $5.95

Lucifer 50 (Mike Carey & P. Craig Russell; *Vertigo)* At the dawn of Creation, there was a woman who defied both God and man for the sake of her own idea of love. Dark secrets and dirty politics collide as the true origins both of the Silver City and Lucifer's relationship with Mazikeen are revealed. Mature. 48pg $3.50

The New Teen Titans Archives Vol 2 (Marv Wolfman & George Pérez + Romeo Tanghal; hbk) Reprints The New Teen Titans Vol 1 #9-16, plus Best of DC (Blue Ribbon Digest) #18, with the Titans heading to Mount Olympus, taking on the Brotherhood of Evil, and more! 240pg $49.95

Outsiders 12 (Judd Winick & Tom Derenick + Kevin Conrad) Psimon is on the loose – and that can't be good for a team comprised of former Titans like Nightwing and Arsenal. And is Roy really ready for battle? $2.50

The Powerpuff Girls 50 (Amy Rogers & Phil Moy + Christopher Cook) The Girls are sucked through a dimensional portal into a world where they're the villains! $2.25

Robin 126 (Bill Willingham & Damion Scott) Tim Drake has given up the mantle once held by Dick Grayson and the late Jason Todd. Now Batman must find a new teen hero to wear the cape. $2.25

Rose & Thorn 6 (of 6; Gail Simone & Adriana Melo + Dan Green) Rose is at the mercy of the insane escaped inmate Ashleigh, and Thorn is nowhere to be found! Will the two sides of Rhosyn Forrest reconcile in time to save both their lives? $2.95

new **Seaguy** 1 (Grant Morrison & Cameron Stewart; *Vertigo)* Set in a world where all the major battles have been won, Seaguy is a wistful, would-be hero who, with his pal Chubby Da Choona, embarks on a fantastical voyage through a post-Utopian world. Mature. 40pg $2.95

Smallville 8 (Clint Carpenter & Tom Derenick + Adam Dekraker) Chloe Sullivan uncovers a Kryptonite-fuelled conspiracy in a secret laboratory and reunites with some old friends. 48pg $3.95

Superman/Batman 10 (Jeph Loeb & Michael Turner) Wonder Woman begins training the beautiful young strange visitor. But when Darkseid and The Female Furies come for her, Superman and Batman join the Amazons in a battle that leads to an unexpected death! $2.95

Thundercats: Dogs Of War (John Layman & various; *WildStorm;* tpbk) When a vicious gang of warriors known as the Dogs of War threatens to shatter the idyllic peace of Thundera, Lion-O may be forced to call on his old foe Mumm-Ra for aid. 128pg $14.95

Transmetropolitan Vol 10: One More Time (Warren Ellis & Darick Robertson + Rodney Ramos; *Vertigo;* tpbk) Witness the fate of journalist Spider Jerusalem as he faces his final showdown with the US President. Mature readers. 144pg $14.95

Wonder Woman 204 (Greg Rucka & Drew Johnson + Ray Snyder) Diana's search for help with the Silver Swan leads her to the same destination as Batman's investigation of the Keyes murder: Veronica Cale. $2.25

Marvel

Cable/Deadpool 3 *(If Looks Could Kill* 3 of 6; Fabian Nicieza & Mark Brooks) The One World Church has a lovely message of eliminating all that divides us to bring about a glorious global unity. All they want is to love you till you're blue in the face – literally! $2.99

Captain Marvel 23 *(Odyssey* 5 of 6; Peter David & Aaron Lopresti) The Earth is destroyed! Humanity is gone! There is only one question: How will we be remembered? You may not like the answer. $2.99

Daredevil 60 *(The King of Hell's Kitchen* 5 of 5; Brian Michael Bendis & Alex Maleev) Daredevil returns, ready to rid the city of Yakuza crime lords once and for all. And this time, he's brought backup. $2.99

Exiles 47 *(Earn Your Wings* 2 of 3; Tony Bedard & Mizuki Sakakibara) The Exiles find themselves ported directly into a none-too-friendly reception from the regular Marvel Universe. $2.99

Fantastic Four 513 *(Spider Sense* 2 of 2; Mark Waid & Mike Wieringo) It's a sad day to be the Human Torch, when your popularity has sunk so low even the web-slinger is more beloved by the people of New York City! $2.25

Hawkeye 8 *(A Little Murder* 2 of 2; Fabian Nicieza & Joe Bennett) While Clint is hunting down a long-lost secret of the Afghani/Russian war, a KGB assassin with a rocket in his pocket is hunting him down. $2.99

Iron Man 82 *(The Deep End* 4 of 4; John Jackson Miller & Philip Tan + Jorge Lucas) Vitriol's threats escalate to their terrifying potential, and a face from Iron Man's past arrives on the scene. $2.99

Marvel Age: Spider-Man 4 (Daniel Quantz & Mark Brooks) How do Spider-Man and Flash Thompson figure into Doctor Doom's plot for world domination and revenge against Reed Richards? $2.25

new **New X-Men: Academy X** #1 *(Choosing Sides* 1 of 5; Nunzio Defilippis & Christina Weir + Randy Green) The children at the X-Mansion thought they had it tough when Professor X was running things – but now that X-Men Cyclops and Emma Frost have taken over the reins of the school, they're wishing for the simpler times of yesterday! $2.99

New X-Men Vol 7 (Grant Morrison & Marc Silvestri, tpbk) Meet the X-Men from 150 years in our future. While some faces may seem familiar, readers will have the chance to discover all-new X-Men heroes and villains for the very first time. Collects New X-Men #151-154. 112pg $10.99

Runaways 15 (Brian K. Vaughan & Adrian Alphona) Our heroes are finally ready to take on their evil parents, and the future of the Marvel Universe hangs in the balance! $2.99

Spider-Girl 74 (Tom DeFalco & Ron Frenz + Pat Olliffe) Spider-Girl's hunt for the new Doctor Octopus is sidetracked by Claw, the Cat, a high-tech villain who's faster, stronger, and more agile. .. $2.99

Thanos Vol 4: Epiphany (Jim Starlin; tpbk) He's held ultimate power in his hands, only to see it all slip away time and again. His attempts at conquest and destruction have all been thwarted. So what inner demons drive the mad Titan known as Thanos towards his goals – and what hidden desires now pull at his heart and mind? Collects Thanos #1-6. 144pg $14.99

Thor 79 (Dan Jurgens & Scott Eaton) Will the devastating attack of Desak, Destroyer of Gods, on the empire Thor has built unite the Odinson and his son, Magni? . $2.99

Ultimate Spider-Man 59 *(Hollywood* 6 of 6; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Bagley) Something strange happens while Doc Ock is in SHIELD custody... $2.25

Wolverine 15 (Greg Rucka & Darick Robertson) The deadly Sabretooth continues his hunt for the mysterious feral creature through the pristine backwoods of the Pacific Northwest, and nothing will stand in his way – including Logan! $2.25

close-up

JSA: All Stars

DC Comics

Writers/Artists: various

Why did the heroes of the JSA choose the path of heroism? Can their legacies be exploited and corrupted? The strange new leader of the Injustice Society plans to find out, and the team is playing right into his hands. This collects the eight-issue miniseries modelled after the Golden Age All Star Comics, bringing a new array of JSAers into the spotlight. 192pg $14.95

ON SALE MAY 26

X-Men 157 *(Day of the Atom* 1 of 4; Chuck Austen & Salvador Larroca) Chuck Austen moves to X-Men (formerly New X-Men) to team up with regular artist Salvador Larroca. $2.25

ON SALE FROM

MAY 26

Dark Horse

Conan 4 (Kurt Busiek & Cary Nord + Tom Yeates) A captive Conan is brought north in chains and learns just how far off the mark his vision of Hyperborea was. $2.99

Seraphic Feather Vol 5: War Crimes (Hiroyuki Utatane & Toshiya Takeda; tpbk) The lure of powerful alien technology discovered on a buried alien starship on the dark side of the moon is the nexus for an international, even interplanetary, game of power, deception, and violence. Collecting stories from Super Manga Blast! #35-43. Mature readers. 240pg b&w $17.95

Star Wars: Republic 65 (John Ostrander & Jan Duursema) In the aftermath of one of the battles of the Clone Wars, a new threat arises: the Jedi discover that someone has placed a bounty on Jedi – the deader, the better. $2.99

Ultraman Tiga 10 (of 10; Tony Wong & Khoo Fuk Lung) The apocalypse has arrived, and it's all Rena and the former members of GUTS can do to stop a deadly downpour of missiles and warheads that's raining across the continent. 40pg $3.99

DC Comics

new **The Authority: More Kev** 1 (of 4; Garth Ennis & Glenn Fabry; *WildStorm)* An alien armada stands poised to assault the planet Earth, bent on destruction and genocide! The Authority is in shambles following an initial encounter with the invaders, leaving Kev alone to fight them off. Is the world doomed? Mature readers. $2.95

Batgirl 52 (Dylan Horrocks & Rick Leonardi + Jesse Delperdang) Poison Ivy has taken over a portion of Gotham City, and Batman's nowhere to be found. Does Batgirl stand a chance against one of the Dark Knight's deadliest adversaries? $2.50

Batman 628 *(As the Crow Flies* 3 of 6, Judd Winick & Dustin Nguyen + Richard Friend) The Penguin's alliance with the Scarecrow seems to be more lethal than even the Penguin expected. $2.25

new **Batman: Cyber Revolution** 1 (of 5; Ron Perazza & Francisco Rodriguez De La Fuente + Aaron Sowd) The Joker has come into possession of a computer virus – one that will reshape the world in his own horrific image. Now Batman, Oracle, Nightwing, Robin, and Black Canary must battle armies of robots that have assumed the most nightmarish forms of Batman's famed Rogues Gallery. $2.95

Batman: Harley & Ivy 2 (of 3; Paul Dini & Bruce Timm + Shane Glines) Harley and Ivy hunt down the priceless Zombie Root in lawless Costa Verde, but will the homicidal loggers Slash and Burn bag them first? $2.50

Caper 8 (of 12; Judd Winick & John Severin) The sex and murder scandal that started as a self-contained incident has exploded into a maelstrom that threatens to take the accused murderer John Hawks down, along with everyone close to him. $2.95

Cartoon Cartoons 30 (various) The Kids Next Door run a major mission – against Numbah Five's own big sister Plus, Johnny Bravo's forced to sell his playthings at a yard sale, and Dexter tries to improve the Easter Bunny with science. $2.25

Catwoman 31 (Ed Brubaker & Paul Gulacy + Jimmy Palmiotti) Selina Kyle is nowhere to be found. Is she in the hands of an ancient Egyptian cult that seems to have its own plans for our Feline Fatale? $2.50

DC: The New Frontier 4 (of 6; Darwyn Cooke) Superman, the Suicide Squad, and the Challengers of the Unknown encounter a frightening extraterrestrial lifeform. Could this hideous creature have anything to do with the sense of impending doom all the heroes are experiencing? 64pg . $6.95

The Flash 210 (Geoff Johns & Howard Porter + Livesay) With the help of his closest friends and fellow heroes, The Flash is about to find out what it's that makes him a favoured target among supervillains. $2.25

Green Lantern 177 *(Homecoming* 2 of 6; Ron Marz & Luke Ross + Rodney Ramos) Being forced to face a major change in his relationship with Jade is the least of his worries when Kyle realises one of his deadliest enemies is on the loose and on his trail, with murder in mind! $2.25

new **Green Lantern/Green Arrow** Vol 1 (Dennis O'Neil & various; tpbk) Collecting Green Lantern #76-82. Hal Jordan continues his usual cosmic-spanning adventures, using his amazing Power Ring to police Sector 2814 against universe-threatening menaces. 176pg ... $12.95

Hellblazer 196 *(Out of Season* 2 of 2; Mike Carey & Chris Brunner; *Vertigo)* In the bleak setting of a British seaside resort town in the dead of winter, John Constantine confronts the madman Gill and is subjected to a terrible test to see if he is worthy to walk in a psychotic's footsteps. Mature readers. $2.75

JLA 99 (John Byrne + Chris Claremont & Byrne + Jerry Ordway) It's an all-out battle, as the JLA tries to save Superman and the victims of the vampire coven and avert worldwide doom! $2.25

one-shot **JSA: All Stars** (various; tpbk) *See Close-Up on previous page.*

Kinetic 3 (Kelley Puckett & Warren Pleece) Tom's beginning to realise that his newfound superpowers may be more than just a crazy daydream. But with no comicbook mentor to guide him, he's going to have to learn how to handle himself on his own and hope he doesn't kill himself in the process! $2.50

The Legion 33 (Dan Abnett + Andy Lanning & Chris Batista + Chip Wallace) Livewire finds himself in a fight for his life and the life of every Legionnaire against the deadly aliens from Legion Lost: the Credo. $2.50

The Light Brigade 4 (of 4; Peter Tomasi & Peter Snejbjerg) The Light Brigade clashes with Zephon, now in possession of The Sword. It's a fight to the death with hundreds of Zephon's undead minions within the walls of the ancient monastery that the Light Brigade's soul-searching journey has led them to. Mature readers 48pg $5.95

The Losers 12 *(Island Life* 4 of 4; Andy Diggle & Jock; *Vertigo)* Their escape plan has been shot down in flames. They're split up and pinned down in a ruined town on the edge of an active volcano. And there's a napalm air-strike with their name on it closing in at Mach 2. It's all in a day's work for the Losers. Mature readers. $2.95

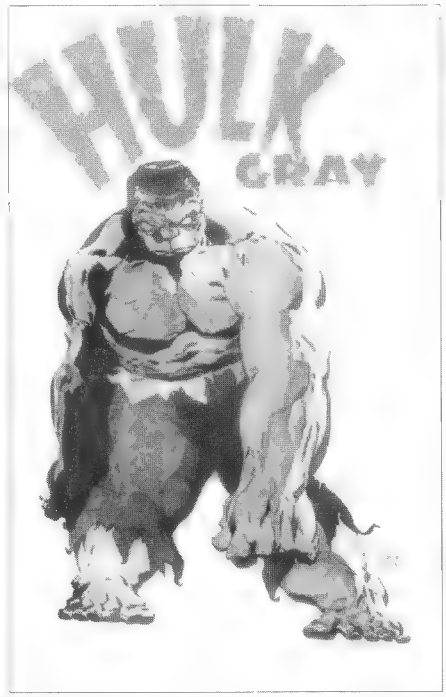
Midnight, Mass: Here There Be Monsters 5 (of 6; John Rozum & Paul Lee; *Vertigo)* Paranormal investigators Adam and Julia Kadmon confront the army of Magellan, the creature who believes he is the chosen saviour of the monster race. Mature readers. . $2.95

Promethea 30 (Alan Moore & J.H. Williams III + Mick Gray; *America's Best Comics)* As the apocalypse continues to extend its reach from Sophie's mum's apartment to encompass the city and the world, various persons converge on their home to put a stop to it – including America's Best, and perhaps more significantly, the last Painted Doll $2.95

new **Richard Dragon** 1 (Chuck Dixon & Scott McDaniel + Andy Owens) When a mysterious figure begins assembling a strike team of the world's greatest assassins, Bronze Tiger sees the coming of a deadly storm. Tiger seeks out Richard Dragon, who's withdrawn from society, battling pit fighters and n's own internal demons in the bowels of a Far East nightclub. Can he be coaxed back into the fray? $2.50

Superman 205 *(For Tomorrow* 2 of 12; Brian Azzarello & Jim Lee + Scott Williams) As if the mysterious vanishings around the globe weren't enough for the Man of Steel, Superman soon finds himself standing in the middle of a conflict between two warring nations. $2.50

Teen Titans Go! 7 (J. Torres & Todd Nauck + Lary Stucker) Starfire's big sister Blackfire is back with a vengeance! Will the Titans become victims of their sibling rivalry? .. $2.25



close-up

Hulk: Gray

Marvel Comics

Writer: Jeph Loeb

Artist: Tim Sale

The creators behind the Marvel Specturm stories – Daredevil: Yellow and Spider-Man: Blue – examine in new detail the earliest days of the Incredible Hulk. As Dr Bruce Banner makes his first transformations into his brutish alter ego, relationships that will influence his life and the life of the Hulk are forged and destroyed. 160pg $21.99

ON SALE MAY 26

Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man 508 (J. Michael Straczynski & John Romita Jr) The enigmatic Ezekiel returns to Peter's life! But is he the same man who stood by Spider Man's side in his hour of need, or will he prove to be something much deadlier? $2.25

new **Astonishing X-Men** 1 *(Gifted* 1 of 6; Joss Whedon & John Cassaday) This issue marks a return to classic greatness (it says here) and the beginning of a brand-new era for the X-Men $2.99

Avengers 83 *(Once an Invader...* 2 of 3; Chuck Austen & Scott Kolins) Who is the mysterious figure that claims to be Captain America, and what mission is he recruiting the super-soldiers of past wars to accomplish? . . $2.25

Avengers/Thunderbolts 4 (of 6; Fabian Nicieza & Kurt Busiek + Tom Grummett) Secrets are revealed, schemes undone and loyalties betrayed. The way one character deals with the emotional maelstrom could very well lead to the destruction of both teams! $2.99

Daredevil: Father 2 (of 5; Joe Quesada) Daredevil has his work cut out for him: New York's crippling heat wave shows no signs of release – and neither does a serial killer with a stranglehold on the city. $3.50

Excalibur 2 *(Forging the Sword* 2 of 2; Chris Claremont & Igor Kordey) Professor Charles Xavier – legendary founder of the X-Men, and the man who dreams of peaceful coexistence between humans and mutants – has come to Genosha with one intention: to rebuild a nation from its ashes. $2.99

Fantastic Four Visionaries: John Byrne Vol 2 (John Byrne; tpbk) The collection of Byrne's classic run continues as the FF face off against two of their greatest foes: Galactus and Doctor Doom! Collects Fantastic Four #241-250. 256pg $24.99

one-shot **Hulk: Gray** (Jeph Loeb & Tim Sale; hbk) *See Close-Up, left*

Iron Man 83 (John Jackson Miller & Philip Tan + Jorge Lucas) The Titanium Man puts in an appearance. $2.99

Mystique 15 *(Unnatural* 2 of 5; Sean McKeever & Manuel Garcia) When Mystique is sent to Europe to investigate a biotech company rumoured to be using mutants as guinea pigs, she discovers a mystery far greater than anything she'd imagined! $2.99

Punisher 6 *(In the Beginning* 6 of 6; Garth Ennis & Lewis Larosa; *MAX Comics)* Everyone gets just what they deserve in the bloody climax to this storyline. Mature readers. $2.99

Silver Surfer 9 (Dan Charlton & Stacy Weiss + Lan Medina) The Silver Surfer begins to doubt his own mission just as Gabe Acheron finally accepts the harsh necessity of the Surfer's plans for Earth $2.99

Ultimate Fantastic Four 6 *(The Fantastic* 6 of 6; Brian Michael Bendis & Mark Millar + Adam Kubert) The Mole Man and his army of ani-men confront the only four people in the world who can stop his plan of global conquest. $2.25

Ultimate X-Men 46 (Brian K. Vaughan & Brandon Peterson) An Ultimatised version of one of the X-Men's greatest adversaries rears his scary head $2.25

Venom 15 *(Twist* 2 of 5, Daniel Way) It's symbiote vs symbiote as two bloodthirsty Venom creatures go head to-head $2.99

Weapon X 24 *(War of the Programs* 2 of 3, Frank Tieri & Tom Mandrake) What did Wolverine recently learn about himself that threatens to destroy everything he believes in? $2.99

Wolverine/Punisher 3 (of 5, Peter Milligan & Lee Weeks) In the bowels of the South American jungle, the Punisher and Wolverine must fight for their lives against a town ful of nasties with just the firepower to bring them down. . $2.99

one-shot **X-Men: Old Soldiers** (Chris Claremont & Alan Davis; tpbk) The New Mutants take on Mojo and Spiral, then must contend with the alien antics of the Impossible Man. Collects New Mutants Annual #2 and #3, Uncanny X-Men Annual #11, and Uncanny X-Men #213 and #215. 200pg $19.99

X-Statix 23 (Peter Milligan & Mike Allred) Vivisector squares off against Hawkeye, while Venus puts the squeeze on Ant-Man! $2.99

RELEASED AND ON SALE IN

MAY

Amaze Ink/ Slave Labor

Dr Radium and The Gizmos of Boola Boola! Vol 2 (of 3; Scott Saavedra, tpbk) Before Dexter and Jimmy there was Dr Radium – the last scientist standing in the perfect world of tomorrow! Ignored by society and feared by his assistant, Dr Radium pursues Science with happy disregard for knowledge, progress, or safety. 112pg b&w .. $9.95

one-shot **Gordon Yamamoto and the King of the Geeks** (Gene Yang; tpbk) A dimwitted-but-loveable high school student learns an important lesson on life after getting something unexpectedly lodged up his nostril. 104pg b&w . $9.95

Lenore 11 (Roman Dirge) Demon Nazis, murderous crows, Ragamuffin attacked by birds, Lenore's pals banding together for battle, and Pooty

gett'n' just down right badass, all in this issue! 24pg b&w $2.95

Outlook: Grim 5 (Black Olive) Something is rotten in the land of the dead, as Wren prepares to outwit some sneaky demons and see what it's really like on the Other Side. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

Pirate Club 2 (Derek Hunter) Fearing that the authorities will soon be on their trail, the Pirate Club gathers supplies, and hits the river; unfortunately, things don't go as easily as expected. 24pg b&w $2.95

Seamonsters & Superheroes 4 (Scott Mills) Featuring a journey to India, foul-mouthed superheroes; and a 200-panel Zebediah, Hillbilly Zombie Redneck graphic novel. 24pg b&w $2.95

Antarctic Press

Dictators: Hitler 2 (of 4; various) Depicts the years Hitler spent as a German infantry soldier during the Great War. While he fought bravely, winning an Iron Cross, the horrors of war would forever change him and teach him to hate. b&w $2.99

Dragon Arms: Chaos Blade 5 (of 6; David Hutchison) Naga and Eon begin an earth-shattering confrontation that may claim creation itself b&w .. $2.99

Gold Digger 53 (Fred Perry) Charlotte fails to mention the small totem she's picked up during her and Penny's South American expedition. $2.99

Gold Digger: Vol 3 Pocket Manga (Thor Thorvaldson Jr; tpbk) Erwin Pee Wee Talon has had it with his henchmen's plunders, so he replaces them. Can Daishi, Zelda, and Ionis get their jobs back? 120pg b&w $9.99

one-shot **Gold Digger Swimsuit Special** 2004 (various) As summer approaches and the weather heats up, so does the swimsuit art from fans! 48pg b&w $4.50

Heaven Sent 3 (Ben Dunn) Now that Kyle's destiny has been revealed, his training is about to begin. However, Samantha's sisters, Hope and Glory, suddenly arrive on Earth with a message from Kyle's mother, who is suffering in Limbo-plus to check out Samantha's new digs. b&w $2.99

I Hunt Monsters 3 (Rod Espinosa & Craig Babiar) Will is sent by his grandfather to the underground subways of New York. An army of winos transformed into Juju Zombies is being assembled, and it's up to Will to stop the growing menace! b&w $2.99

one-shot **Legends From Darkwood** Vol 1 (Chris Reid & John Kantz; tpbk) Darkwood is filled with a few modern problems: natives slaughtered by overzealous real estate developers, a fantastic species on the brink of extinction, and a woman who has combined her maidenhood and hunting skill to form an economic juggernaut! 142pg b&w $9.99

Neotopia Vol 3 #3 (Rod Espinosa) The Lesazonians, strongly opposed against Maledon, close ranks and protect Nalyn and her small crew for the first time. But the ancient weapon brought by General Kaizler wreaks havoc among the scattered Lesazonian defences, severely injuring Nalyn! $2.99

Ninja High School 117 (Katie Bair) The world is ending! Not because of the cliché sinister organisation using giant robots for global conquest. The world is doomed because somebody angered a Hawaiian mongoose. b&w $2.99

Twilight X: Storm 8 (Joseph Wight) Caught in the middle of a tropical hurricane, Jed and Toots search in vain for their friends, who are trapped between two mighty armies bent on mutual destruction. Bimonthly. b&w $2.99

Archie Comics

Archie 548 (Craig Boldman & George Gladir + Stan Goldberg) Archie gets Mr Lodge a jack-in-the-box from his youth! $2.19

Betty 138 (Mike Pellowski & Barbara Slate + Stan Goldberg) A bevy of brawls at Happy Trails Day Camp has Betty wondering whether she's a camp counsellor or a referee. $2.19

Betty & Veronica Spectacular 66 (Barbara Slate & Dan Parent) Betty and Veronica each schedule a party on the same night, unaware of one another's plans. Now Archie not only has to choose between a blonde and a brunette. $2.19

Betty & Veronica Digest 148 (various) Teen dream queens Betty and Veronica romp through this collection of new stories and classic tales. ... $2.39

Jughead 158 (Craig Boldman & Rex Lindsey) Walkie talkies seem like a good idea, until Archie realises Veronica can keep tabs on him at all times. ... $2.19

Jughead With Archie Digest 193 (various) If you think Archie gets into trouble on his own, check out the action when he teams up with Jughead! $2.39

Laugh Digest 193 (various) The high school hijinx of the entire Riverdale gang are highlighted in this collection of new stories and classic tales. $2.39

Sabrina 58 (Tania del Rio) When fellow witch Shinji decides to do a charm school project on how mortals can live without magic, he winds up an exchange student at Sabrina's high school! $2.19

Sonic the Hedgehog 137 (various) Without the consent of the King, Sonic and the Freedom Fighters infiltrate the Eggman Empire deep in the technological monstrosity of Megapolis. $2.19

Veronica 152 (Dan Parent) Disenchanted with Cheryl's return to Riverdale, Veronica befriends some gal pals from Cheryl's old neighbourhood, Pembrooke! $2.19

Avatar Press

new **Joe R Lansdale's By Bizarre Hands** 1 (of 6; Joe R Lansdale & Dheeraj Verma + Jacen Burrows) A well mannered preacher with a taste for saving retarded girls goes travelling to find some Halloween fun and ends up unleashing his inner demons. Mature readers. b&w $3.50

new **Rich Johnston's Holed Up** 1 (of 3; Rich Johnston & Gonzalo Martinez) In the separatist community of Idaho, the Holed family must cope with the ever encroaching invasion of a society that wants to take away their freedom. Mature readers. b&w $3.50

one-shot **Garth Ennis' 303 Preview** (Garth Ennis & Jacen Burrows) A very hard man leads the Russian special forces team that is investigating a downed plane in Afghanistan. But when British and US forces also get thrown in the mix, tension turns to carnage as the whole mission goes sideways. Mature readers. 12pg $0.99

Warren Ellis' Strange Killings: Necromancer 2 (of 6, Warren Ellis & Mike Wolfer) Arriving in the Philippines, Gravel's covert mission is simple: Assassinate a reporter investigating a renegade British scientist conducting illegal chemical weapons tests in the region. As the combat magician closes in on his target, his assignment becomes a bit more complicated b&w .. $3.50

Hellina vs Pandora 3 (Doug Miers & Di Amorim) The demonic forces of Hell have collided into the largest battle the world has ever seen. But while the war rages on, Hellina is surprised by someone from her past, who holds a deadly power over her. Variant covers. Mature readers. $3.50

Nightjar 3 (Antony Johnston & Max Fiumara) Beyond our reality lies the Dusk Latitudes, the magical domain of dead Birds. Dark and hostile, few enter the Latitudes willingly. But tonight is the night insanity reigns on Pendle Hill, and while Angie tries to escape the fanatical clutches of the Reverend Brown, the Latitudes may be Mirrigan's only hope of avoiding a fiery death at the hands of the Phoenix. Mature readers. $3.50

Bongo Comics

one-shot **Simpsons Big Bratty Book of Bart Simpson** (various; tpbk) Mistaken identities, alien recipes, cereal package prizes, unrequited love, lima beans, facial hair, karaoke, cafeteria shenanigans, talk shows, mail order brides, sidekicks gone mad, hideous monsters, balloon animals, girl scout cookies, circus popcorn, marital arts, and history gone very wrong. Collects Bart Simpson #9-12. 120pg $12.95

Simpsons Comics 94 (Boothby & Escobar) Springfield is in for a rude awakening when financial necessity requires that all the businesses, all the government programmes, and all the citizens operate non stop 24/7. .. $2.99

Futurama Comics 17 (Boothby & Delaney) Fry, Leela, Bender, and Cubert return to Earth from last issue's outer space adventure at boarding school only to find the planet Earth completely uninhabited. $2.99

Heroes Anonymous 5 (of 6; Gimple + Morrison & Wky + Pepoy) Beelzebubella's not evil, she's just drawn that way and happens to be the daughter of the Lord of the Underworld. Okay, so maybe she is a little evil. But can her soul-harvesting, kitty killing and reality television producing ways continue when she finds out her long lost mother has become a born again Christian? Mature readers. $2.99

Claypool

Deadbeats 65 (various) Plunged into an awful alternate future in which monsters have overtaken Mystic Grove, Kirby Collier allies himself with the grown-up children of his friends to oppose the evil intruders. b&w .. $2.50

Soulsearchers 66 (various) Gabrie got his monster-zapping gun from the angel Nadine, becoming a new champion. Now the cosmic balance strikes back when evil energies create an opponent for him and his angel power. b&w ... $2.50

Elvira 132 (Frank Strom & various) Elvira gets miniaturised in *To Squash an Elvira*. b&w $2.50

Elvira 133 (Frank Strom & various) Elvira and friends are surprised by Squid-Men looking for love in *Dangers on a Train*. b&w $2.50

Drawn & Quarterly

Optic Nerve 9 (Adrian Tomine) Examines the troubled sex-life of a confused, obsessive, Japanese-American male in his late 20s, and his cross-country search for the perfect girl. Mature readers. b&w $3.95

one-shot **Way To Go** (Harry Mayerovitch; graphic novel) So what's so funny about death and dying? At age 93, Harry Mayerovitch penned these whimsical drawings that offer another perspective on the Way to go. 100pg b&w $9.95

DreamWave

Devil May Cry 4 (Brad Mick; & Pat Lee) To defeat a devil Dante must first become a devil. But will unleashing the supernatural evil that he's struggled to contain all for so long grant him the power necessary to finally avenge his father's murder at the hands of the Demon Lord Mundus? 40pg $3.95

Duel Masters 7 (Brian Augustyn; & Jeremy Tiongson) The last beast-man, the elephant-like Tantaar, fights to exact vengeance on the enemies who destroyed his people – and to reclaim a powerful talisman of his race stolen years before. $2.95

Transformers Armada: More Than Meets The Eye 3 (of 3; Adam Patyk & Brad Mick + various) The Armada has assembled to do battle with the evil Unicron! Find out more about him – as well as Starscream, Tidal Wave, Optimus Prime, and Powerlinx versions galore. 48pg $4.95

Transformers: Energon 23 (Simon Furman; & Guido Guidi) The Ominicons make their terrestrial debut, joining Optimus Prime and the Autobots' last desperate bid to rescue Kicker and Dr Jones from Scorponok's Terrorcons. $2.95

Transformers: Generation One 5 (Brad Mick & Don Figueroa) Hot on the trail of the superpowered Decepticon Sunstorm, Bumblebee and his fellow Autobots are shocked to discover an ancient Decepticon secret located deep within the bowels of the Earth ... $2.95

one-shot **Transformers: Summer Special** (various) Delivers the first-ever DW takes on the classic Beast Wars and Robots In Disguise franchises. 48pg $4.95

Fantagraphics

new **Blood Orange** 1 (various) Acting as a forum of sorts for both established and up-and-coming cartoonists and published four times a year, this first issue of Blood Orange showcases the comic art of Rick Altergott, Lauren Weinstein, Kevin Huizenga, and Ron Regé Jr. Mature readers. 48pg b&w $5.95

The Comics Journal 261 (various) Exhaustive cover interview with Phoebe Gloeckner, author of A Child's Life and Diary of a Teenage Girl! Mature readers. 128pg b&w $6.95

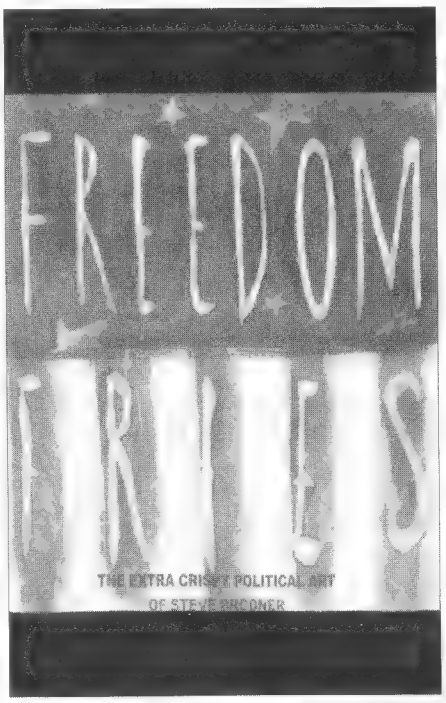
one-shot **Freedom Fries** (Steve Brodner; graphic novel) *See Close-Up, left.*

one-shot **The Kid Firechief** (Steven Weissman; graphic novel) Even though he's just a poor orphaned boy, it's a well-known fact that there's no greater firefighter than Olaf Oedwards, aka Kid Firechief! 96pg $12.95

La Perdida 4 (of 5; Jessica Abel) Oscar and Memo go AWOL without explanation, and Carla suspects that they are planning something dangerous. Mature readers. 48pg b&w $4.95

one-shot **The Lizard of Oz** (Mark Bodé; graphic novel) Working from ideas

close-up



Freedom Fries

Fantagraphics

Writer/Artist: Steve Brodner

Brodner has, for the last three decades or so, been a savage satirist. This is his absurd and nightmarish journey through the last 30 years of American politics. Line 'em up: Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush I, Clinton, Bush II. What a motley crew. These pages contain mostly full-colour cartoons, embroidered with Brodner's own acidic commentary and behind-the-scenes scoops. Mature readers. 240pg $29.95

ON SALE MAY

developed by Vaughn Bodé before his death, his son Mark has re-enlisted his father's entire cast of characters for The Lizard of Oz, a full-colour graphic novel that pays playful homage to, and parodies, the classic L. Frank Baum fairy tale. Mature readers. 64pg $12.95

Luba's Comics and Stories 4 (Gilbert Hernandez) It seems like everyone is writing a book about themselves in Venus' extended family. She considers writing one herself, but when she admits to herself that she can't write, she decides to make a movie instead. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $3.50

Meat Cake 13 (Dame Darcy) Learn along with all the Meat Cake characters as they attend the Bat Institute of Technology and take classes such as Drunken Boxing 101 and Vampire Attack Class. Mature readers. b&w ... $3.95

The Stuff of Dreams 2 (Kim Deitch) Kim's wife buys a costume from an old movie serial shot in New Jersey, just before World War One called Alias The Cat. Gradually, we unearth a tragic story of a Czech who flees his country in the wake of war to avoid the business of killing to pursue a career of art through fireworks. Mature readers. b&w $3.95

Image Comics

Age of Bronze Vol 2 (Eric Shanower; hbk) White Trojan prince Paris returns to Troy with Helen, the Achaean fleet mistakenly attacks Mysia, then is scattered by a storm. Collects Age Of Bronze #10-19. 224pg b&w $29.95

Aria Vol 3: The Uses of Enchantment (Brian Holguin & various; tpbk) When a mysterious invitation literally drops into Kildare's lap, she is lead to a remarkable discovery – a genuine magical kingdom hidden away in the Catskill Mountains. Collects Aria. The Uses of Enchantment #1-4 and Aria. A Summer Spell #1-2. 144pg $14.95

Bad Ideas 2 (of 2; Wayne Chinsang & Jim Mahfood + Dave Crosland) Follow Comic Kid and Hot Chick on their first real crime-fighting adventure. What will Hot Chick wear? What won't Comic Kid eat? 48pg b&w $5.95

Bloodstream 4 (of 4; Adam Shaw & Penny Register + Shaw) Pleading for his life, Dr Evers reveals the truth behind Amber's abduction and why her body accepted the synthetic blood. Mature readers. $2.95

Casefiles: Sam & Twitch 12 (Marc Andreyko & Andy Lee) Heroin. Gang Wars. Chinatown. Vampires. Mature readers. $2.50

Common Grounds 5 (of 6; Troy Hickman & Dan Jurgens + Angel Medina; *Top Cow)* Dan Jurgens illustrates the tale of a love-lost immortal, while Angel Medina shows us what happens *Where Monsters Dwell* $2.99

The Darkness 11 (Ron Marz & Martin Montiel; *Top Cow)* Jackie is getting the family under control but now has a run in with Chinese gangsters sends him to Hong Kong where he finds that he is not the only one involved with a little supernatural help. $2.99

A Distant Soil 37 (Colleen Doran) Unknown to the evil Hierarchy, a group of rebels have infiltrated a powerful warship, while thousands of enslaved rebels amass to overthrow their captors b&w . $3.95

Feather 5 (of 5; Steve Uy) After the disastrous results of the dragon hunt chronicled last issue, Sehven and Leeka find themselves at each other's throats. 48pg $5.95

one-shot **Freak** (Lee Ferguson; graphic novel) Humanity is just a small part of a world filled with forces beyond our comprehension, a supernatural domain most of us will never experience. But Alex isn't like most of us. He's cursed with an unimaginable power that has taken everything from him and driven him to the brink of madness. 64pg $6.95

new **Ghost Spy** 1 (of 6; Steve Albertson & Jacob Elijiah) Keico Loc thwarts a diabolical plot to launch the experimental chemical Adrenafin into the city. Keico is entrusted with delivering the Adrenafin to an underground Bio-warfare complex. With the help of the ambitiously violent Rame and Griggs, Keico lays waste to thugs and tanks alike on their battle through the forgotten blocks of Chi-Nova. ... $2.95

Invincible 13 (Robert Kirkman & Ryan Ottley) There is nothing below him. There is nothing above him. For as far as Mark can see, there is nothing all around him. What happened to Mark last issue to put him in this place? $2.95

Jack Staff 7 (Paul Grist) He's called the Shadow and he's an ambiguous, amoral enigma. But when Becky Burdock finds herself at the mercy of a group of monster hunters, the Shadow is the only one who can help her! .. $2.95

one-shot **Liberty Meadows Source Book** (Frank Cho) *See Close-Up, above.*

NYC Mech 2 (Miles Gunter & Ivan Brandon + Andy MacDonald) Nika lives a disposable life at full speed; she wants more than you do and always something new. When her expectations grow faster than her means, she points a gun and quietly gets her way. $2.95

Patient Zero 3 (of 4; John McLean-Foreman & Brent White) As the Al's forces near victory, Ioway lies dying, and Samuel Deighton is tortured to reveal the location of his genetic research. $2.95

Phantom Jack 3 (Mike Sangiacomo & Mitchell Breitweiser) In the weeks before the start of the 2003 ground war, Jack is forced to return to Baghdad, the site of his biggest failure, and find his brother. $2.95

Powers, Vol 2 #3 (Brian Michael Bendis & Michael Avon Oeming) A hero has returned. But is it enough to keep the city safe from the crossfire – as the city's most powerful villains gun for each other in a massive turf war? Mature $2.95

PvP 8 (Scott Kurtz) Brent Sienna dies! How will the staff of PvP magazine go on? What meaning does the afterlife hold for Brent? b&w $2.95

Rex Mundi 12 (Arvid Nelson & Eric J) Julien discovers a tenuous link between a group of medieval heretics and the anathematised Knights Templar. $2.95

one-shot **Sammy: A Very Sammy Day** (Azad) Samuel Little has been sleeping with one eye open with good reason. He's a snitch, and everyone knows it. After ratting out his old crew to the cops, he's finding it difficult to adjust to normal life in his old neighbourhood. 48pg b&w $5.95

Spawn 145 (Brian Holguin + Todd McFarlane & Angel Medina; *TMP)* Spawn must fulfil a blood oath made centuries ago by Lord Covenant, the Dark Ages Hellspawn. But Covenant sees a chance to save his own damned soul, even if it costs the world. .. $2.50

one-shot **Spawn: Simony** (Alex Nikolavitch & Jeff Porcherot + Nikolavitch; *TMP)* The French Spawn Project initially published in 2003 by Semic in France. Translated into English and available outside France for the first time. 68pg $7.95

Strykeforce 2 (of 5; Jay Faerber & Tyler Kirkham + Marlo Alquiza; *Top Cow)* Stryker's search for little Tommy Jenkins leads him straight into an ambush. $2.99

Sword of Dracula 4 (Jason Henderson & William Belk) Ronnie Van Helsing has Dracula in captivity – but a man who can boil the blood in your head is a hard man to interrogate. b&w $2.95

Tomb Raider 42 *(Spirit Walker* 2 of 2; James Bonny & Wilson Tortosa + Tyson Wengler; *Top Cow)* Double-crossed by the head of a multi-national corporation, Lara Croft travels to Australia to stop him from using the powers of the Spirit Walker, an ancient, mystical charm stolen from the Aborigines in the 18th Century. $2.99

The Walking Dead 8 (Robert Kirkman & Tony Moore) The search for suitable shelter continues. Rick and crew find themselves at the mercy of a harsh winter that makes their arduous journey that much more difficult. For months they've looked for something to take their minds OFF the zombie threat at hand... and now that they've got it; they're in more danger than ever before. Mature readers. b&w $2.95

Wanted 5 (of 6; Mark Millar & J.G. Jones; *Top Cow)* The ultimate evil known as Mister Rictus has made his move to take over the supervillain Fraternity – and the world. Only Wesley Gibson, newly anointed as The Killer, stands in his way. Mature readers. $2.99

Witchblade 76 (Troy Hickman & David Nakayama; *Top Cow)* New bad girl, Celestine, is a torn soul. She has the potential for great good and great evil. Sara must stop her trail of carnage while at the same time keeping the Witchblade from choosing Celestine as its new bearer -a love triangle of epic proportions! $2.99

one-shot **Witchblade/ Wolverine** (Chris Claremont & Eric Basaldua; *Top Cow)* Special tale that starts out with Wolverine and Witchblade-wielder Sara Pezzini getting married. $2.99

Moonstone

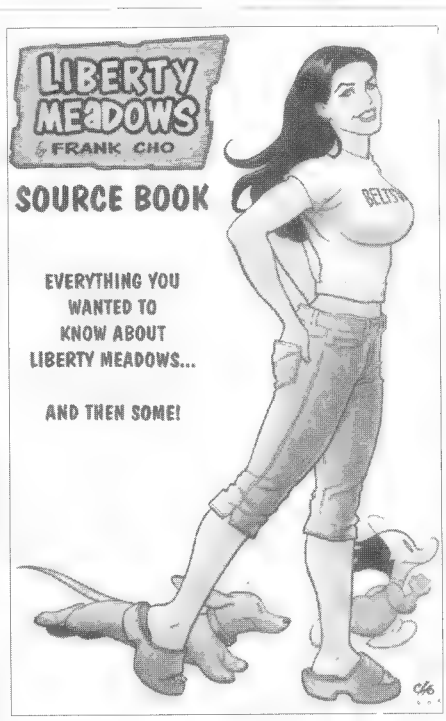
new **Moonstone Noir: Bulldog Drummond** 1 (William Messner Loebs & Brett Barkley) After a tour of the trenches of WW1, Bulldog heads back to London, and sets up a private detective agency with some of the lads from his squadron. Mature readers. 48pg b&w $4.95

The Phantom 3 (Ben Raab & Nick Derington) Kua stalks Kit Walker deep into the woods of Bangalla. Studying the words of his ancestors, Kit does his detective work on what motivates this fiend to hate his family so, and also what methods were used to deceive them through the ages. Will he come to grips with this unfathomable mystery in time to save his life? $3.50

Soulcatcher 2 (of 2; Jason Henderson + Lou Manna & Terry Pallot) Roma and Chris Lockman, the Witchfinder guardians of New Orleans, seek help from the twisted ghost known as the Crab Lady – and uncover the secret of Roma's ability to siphon the powers of the dead. $3.50

Oni Press

one-shot **Closer** (Antony Johnston + Mike Norton & Leanne Buckley, graphic novel) Graham Butcher has invited six people to his home; each with a different connection to his failed experiment. Together they will unleash a darkness born of a past they all would rather forget! 152pg b&w $14.95



close-up

Liberty Meadows Source Book

Fantagraphics Books

Writer/Artist: Frank Cho

It's life and love as usual in Liberty Meadows animal sanctuary, where anything and everything can happen. This volume represents a Liberty Meadows encyclopedia, containing everything you might need to know about the breakthrough title. Includes character sheets, fun facts, trivia, behind the scenes commentary and unpublished art. 48pg $4.95

ON SALE MAY

one-shot **Scooter Girl** (Chynna Clugston-Major; tpbk) Watch Ashton Archer's downfall from big boy about town to total loser as soon as Margaret Sheldon enters his life. Mature. 168pg b&w $14.95

Deep Sleeper 4 (of 4; Phil Hester & Mike Huddleston) Cole is desperate to wake up. His dreams, his stories, they've taken over his life. It's time for him to confront them once and for all – embrace the weirdness in his head or turn his back on it forever. Mature readers. b&w $3.50

Penny-Farthing

Para 3 (Stuart Moore & Pablo Villalobos + Mostafa Moussa) Deep in the bowels of the world's largest particle accelerator, Sara Erie and the investigating team finally come face-to-face with the alien life form that's already killed two of their friends. $2.95

Sirius

Akiko Vol 1 (Mark Crilley; graphic novel) The debut story from the Akiko on the Planet Smoo is collected alongside issues #1-7 of the Akiko series. Follow the adventures of Akiko from the very beginning! 192pg b&w $11.95

Dogwitch 11 (Daniel Schaffer) The deranged doll named Dolores Twist tempts Violet into donning a slimy artefact found lying dormant under the stairs. Mature readers. 24pg b&w $2.95

Tokyopop

Ai Love You Vol 3 (of 8; Ken Akamatsu; graphic novel) When Thirty goes to rescue her older sister from the clutches of the scam artist's computer security system, she comes face to face with none other than the virus Peter 4. 240pg b&w $9.99

Battle Royale Vol 7 (of 11; Koushun Takami & Masayuki Taguchi; graphic novel) Unwilling to bow down to the oppressive confines of The Game, Shinj develops a plan to deliver his hand-made bombs directly to enemy HQ. Mature readers. 224pg b&w $9.99

Battle Vixens Vol 2 (of 6; Yuji Shiozaki; graphic novel) Hakufu encounters Ryomou, one of the strongest Toushi at her school with disastrous results. Mature readers. 168pg b&w $9.99

Canidate For Goddess Vol 2 (of 5; Yukiru Sugisaki; graphic novel) After logging many hours of demanding physical training, Zero and his classmates finally get to test their piloting skills. b&w $9.99

new **Comic Party** Vol 1 (of 3; Sekihiko Inui; graphic novel) Kazuki's everyday life is absorbed by drawing manga and attending a multitude of comic conventions. Sure, his new career as a struggling artist has begun, but at what cost to his friends and family? 192pg b&w $9.99

Demon Ororon Vol 2 (of 4; Mizuki Hakase; graphic novel) A great battle erupts as bounty hunters descend on Chiaki's house, leaving Ororon's hands tied; he has promised Chiaki that he won't kill anyone, but the fighting is escalating. 208pg b&w $9.99

new **Deus Vitae** Vol 1 (of 3; Takuya Fujima; graphic novel) In the year 2068, a virtually perfect society has been designed with just one virus in need of elimination: humans! Ash Ramy is one of the few surviving humans in the Revolutional Organisation bent on freeing earth from Selenoid rule. 200pg b&w $9.99

Digimon Tamers Vol 2 (of 5; Akiyoshi Hongo; graphic novel) While more and

more Digimon start marking their territory on Earth, the Technology Investigation Bureau enforces some big-brotherly rules. 168pg b&w $9.99

D.N.Angel Vol 2 (of 8, Yukiru Sugisaki; graphic novel) The annual midwinter hike snowballs in the park for the students of Azumano Middle School. Daisuke has been dreading the trek all year, but his one ray of hope is that he gets to show off his mountain manhood for his beloved Risa. 184pg b&w $9.99

Fairly Odd Parents Vol 2 (of 2; Butch Hartman graphic novel) Timmy's in trouble. Between speed-aging so he won't need Vicky anymore, switching places with her spoiled dog, shrinking to check out her insides and getting her blamed for kidnapping the town mascot Timmy keeps his fairy godparents pretty busy! 96pg $7.99

Fruits Basket Vol 3 (of 11; Natsuki Takaya; graphic novel) It's Valentine's Day and that means a lot of chocolates for the cutest boys at school! In this case it's a pretty close call between hot-headed Kyo Sohma and Yuki Sohma. 200pg b&w $9.99

Get Backers Vol 3 (of 23; Yuya Aoki & Rando Ayamine; graphic novel) Ginji and Ban successfully track down a mysterious box from the Transporters, but the Transporters won't give up without a fight 200pg b&w $9.99

new **Immortal Rain** Vol 1 (of 5, Kaori Ozaki; graphic novel) For centuries, the eternal Rain Jewlitt, known as the Methuselah, has eluded assassins and bounty hunters out to uncover his timeless secret. One of his pursuers, the Grim Reaper Zol, never succeeded in killing Rain. In the wake of Zol's death, his 18 year old granddaughter Machika vows to avenge her grandfather's death and put an end to Rain's immortality. 234pg b&w $9.99

Initial D Vol 12 (of 26; Suichi Shigeno; graphic novel) Just as Iggy and Katsumi's relationship begins to heat up, her brother Wataru revs up the wheels of his turbocharged 86 and calls out the Redsuns on their home turf. b&w $9.99

new **Lilo & Stitch TV Show** Vol 1 (of 3; various; graphic novel) Lilo brings home an adorable stray dog named Stitch, the thing is, Stitch isn't really a dog but the product of an illegal genetic experiment who has escaped his evil creator. 96pg b&w $7.99

Magic Knight Rayearth II Vol 3 (of 3, CLAMP; graphic novel) Three invading countries have come to claim Cephiro as their own, and each will stop at nothing until it is victorious! b&w $9.99

Mink Vol 2 (of 6, Megumi Tachikawa; graphic novel) Mink's future becomes so bright that she's got to wear shades, until her role model Azumi Mizuhara threatens to keep her from climbing up the charts. 192pg b&w $9.99

One Vol 2 (of 11; Lee Vin; graphic novel) Eumpa turns a deaf ear to the music world, even as Jenny urges him to kick out the jams. But when Eumpa's teacher admits that he stole his student's music, the music industry sings a different tune toward Eumpa. 200pg b&w $9.99

new **Remote** Vol 1 (of 6; Seimaru Amagi & Tetsuya Kosniba; graphic novel) Kotomi Ayaki is a police officer with a record of excellence on the force and the guts and guile to back it up. She is summoned to solve those crimes that have been classified as unsolvable. Mature readers. 176pg b&w $9.99

new **Seikai Trilogy** 1 (of 3 Aya Yoshinaga & Toshiro Ono; graphic novel) After his home world is ruthlessly taken over by a space-faring race that has conquered thousands of galaxies, a boy named Jinto begins an unforgettable journey that stretches the boundaries of the final frontier. 248pg b&w $9.99

Shirahime-Syo: Snow Goddess Tales (CLAMP; graphic novel) A collection of five tragic tales, all connected by the bond of snow. 144pg b&w $9.99

Suki Vol 3 (of 3 CLAMP; graphic novel) When Emi learns of Hina's wealthy background, she hatches a dastardly plot to kidnap her and Asou-sensei. 176pg b&w $9.99

INTERNATIONAL

Black Library

Warhammer Monthly 81 (various) This month sees the return of the Daemonifuge as Ephrael Stern is hunted by the dark powers of Chaos. The Old World's most feared mercenary, Hebrandt Grimm, tracks down his quarry in a brand new story! 40pg b&w .. $3.50

Inferno! Magazine 42 (various) The Storm of Chaos is unleashed in Nick Kyme's *A Storm Rising*, while CS Goto pens *The Blood of Angels*, a fantastic tale of the Angels Sanguine as they battle against the Emperor's foes. 68pg b&w $6.95

one-shot **The Horus Heresy Vol 1: Visions of War Art Book** (ed Alan Merrett) Mankind's struggle against the traitorous forces of Warmaster Horus after he allied with Chaos. 96pg $29.99

UK NEWSSTAND

DC Thomson

The Beano 3208-3211 (weekly; various) Classic kids humour anthology featuring Dennis the Menace, the Bash Street Kids, and all your favourites. £0.55

Beano Superstars 148 (various) One complete strip of the long-running humour anthology. 36pg £0.65

Classics From The Comics 94 (various) Anthology reprinting classic cartoon strips from DC Thomson's vintage kids' comics Beano and Dandy. 68pg b&w £1.20

Commando Action And Adventure Stories 3678-3785 (eight per month; digest; various) Featuring one self-contained comic strip per issue. Some new material. 68pg b&w £1.00

Fun-Size Beano 157-158 (fortnightly; various) Pocket-sized spin-off from the Beano featuring Dennis the Menace, and all the usual suspects. 68pg £0.60

Panini Comics

Action Man 95 (four-weekly; various) All new soldier adventure yarns, plus quizzes and prizes based on the action figure. 28pg £1.50

Astonishing Spider-Man 108 (four-weekly, various, Marvel UK) Official UK outing for US Marvel comic adventures, with free posters and extras. 76pg £2.40

Avengers United 38 (various) Fast-paced action from Marvel's largest superhero team including the Hulk, Captain America, Iron Man, Hawkeye and the Scarlet Witch. £2.40

Doctor Who Magazine 342 (four-weekly; various) Contains celebrity interviews, feature articles and stories based on the ancient doc. 52pg. £3.30

Essential X-Men 111 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) Thrilling volume full of comic strip adventures. The stories are exciting serials that carry from one issue to the next, published in original American format. 76pg £2.40

Powerpuff Girls Powerzine 23 (various) Comicstrips and fun, entertaining and humorous features presented by the three superheroines, Blossom, Bubbles and Buttercup. £1.75

Scooby Doo 11 (various) Regular vanquishing of baddies who, frankly would have got away with it if it weren't for those pesky kids. Also contains competitions, activities, quizzes and more! £1.99

Spectacular Spider-Man 95 (various) New comic strips and games. Plus a bunch of free posters and a competition 36pg £1.50

Transformers Armada 12 (various) Original UK comic strip, data files, cyber-puzzles, competitions and more. . £1.75

Ultimate Spider-Man 27 (various, Marvel UK) Tells a tale of Spider-Man, retold with modern-day computer enhanced artwork. £1.95

Ultimate X-Men 13 (various, Marvel UK) Reveals the incredible origins of Cyclops, Marvel Girl, Storm, Beast, Colossus and Iceman. £1.95

Wolverine & Gambit 97 (four-weekly; various; Marvel UK) Compiles US Marvel's own brand of Wolverine comic strips plus magazine-style feature articles on the tortured lupine one. 76pg .. £2.40

Rebellion

2000AD 1388 1391 (various) Skysurfer Chopper is brought back to Mega-City One on a mission of mercy, courtesy of John Wagner, Patrick Goddard and Dylan Teague, while undercover Judge Aimee Nixon discovers a conspiracy in *Low Life* by Rob Williams and Henry Flint. $3.75

Judge Dredd Megazine 219 (various) Judge Dredd begins his crusade against the New Mutant Army in *Damned Ranger*, while Mean Machine's in love in *Angel Heart*. $10.99

1977

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Comment

CI, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk)

Comment is a forum to enable fans and professionals alike to express their personal points of view on aspects of the comics industry. As such, the following opinions do not necessarily reflect those of this publication, but space will be given in subsequent issues to well-reasoned opposing views. Submissions are edited only for grammar, clarity and brevity.

Librarian "wanking in the bath"

Comment by Andy Jones, Rainhill, Merseyside

ABOUT six months ago, after reading yet another letter in **CI** that whined about how kids no longer read comics yet stopped short of offering a solution, I took it upon myself to do my bit.

Looking to streamline my collection anyway, I took eight or 10 of those catch-all trade paperback volumes you might buy as a comics neophyte, and decided to donate them to my local library. These books featured mainstream heroes like Spider-Man, the Hulk, Daredevil and the X-Men and I believed their kiddie appeal might be maximised by the recent movie adaptations of said characters

It wasn't an entirely altruistic gesture; like a lot of **CI** readers, I'm a budding writer/artist and I'd like there still to be an industry when I burst on to the scene to the collective amazement and gratitude of fandom worldwide. Probably.

Anyway, I considered that if just 5-10% of the kids loaning out those books were inspired to delve further, my job was done. I'd have single-handedly saved the comics industry. Again, probably.

Yesterday, I returned to the library and wandered into the kids' section, curious to see how my books had fared. I recognised two as having been mine. The first had been loaned out a total of two times, the other thrice. In six months! Ungrateful bastard anklebiters!

I busied myself elsewhere and soon noticed a lad of about eight mithering his mother to loan out my copy of **Hulk: Transformations**. She'd obviously have preferred him to be reading a 'proper' book, but relented and took it to the check-out desk.

I watched in horror as the bespectacled, menopausal fucking muppet behind said desk told the woman, "I'm afraid this book is listed as adult material. It might feature scenes of violence and bad language".

The boy's mother looked perturbed and told her sad-eyed progeny, "I don't think you'd like this, son. Let's put it back.". I was incensed! I strode over and said, forcefully, "Excuse me, I donated that book to this library and it's absolutely suitable for children".

That seemed sufficient guarantee for Protective Mother, who nodded her appreciation. Glorified Book Stacker, on the other hand, looked like she'd been caught wanking in the bath. Mystery solved, it seems.

No wonder my books aren't reaching their intended audience. Granted, their rather limited graphic novel section also includes Peter Milligan's **Enigma** almost certainly not suitable for children. But these two disparate volumes (both arbitrarily classed as 'adult material') are perversely lumped together in the children's section, regardless of theme. Next time, I'll likely not waste such gestures on such fucking Philistines.

I intend to write a strongly worded letter to the local council's library head. You're cordially invited to watch this space.

And now the Darkman of Steel

Comment by Ben Spashett, Whitby, North Yorkshire

WHILE reading last month's **CI**, I came across your *Preview* section and Jim Lee's artwork for the upcoming Superman revamp. I must say I'm a bit perturbed.

Jim Lee is undoubtedly one of the industry's best talents, you only have to look at his fantastic work on **Coup D'Etat** #1 (and, excuse my French, but does *of* need a capital D?) and the recent **Batman: Hush** to see this.

But Superman? And accompanied by Mr Noir himself, Brian Azzarello? Throw me some apple pie here. I thought Kansas's finest farm boy was red, white and blue, not shady hues of grey.

The logic is obvious: Jim Lee can save **Superman**! After all, he added over 100,000 to **Batman** sales. In his wake, Azzarello kept it buoyant, so let's put them together on the other flailing flagship title and sell a bucket load more copies.

I hope I'm proved wrong. I'd like nothing more than to see **Superman** return to the forefront of the industry, but DC, don't just throw big name talents around and hope they work regardless of their respective strengths.

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Networks

Comics news and gossip on the Internet

Compiled by Chris Rice and his team of Netmites

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

The mild-mannered creator/writer of the Internet's original comics industry rumour and news column has outraged many a publisher and survived more than one change of website. But, despite several attempts to stop it, the Squiddy Award-winning gutterpress site continues to thrive, with over 20,000 hits a week at its new home of www.comicbookresources.com

From his unique vantage point, Rich often scoops the industry newshounds with his stories. Here are the highlights from this month's Gutter...

1603

Expect a number of **1602** spin-offs at Marvel, from different creators (not Neil Gaiman). After the success of the current miniseries, Marvel is trying to turn it into what DC turned **Sandman** into, a series of forever replenishing series and miniseries.

Right Side/Left Side Brain Conflict

Quite a while ago Mark Millar linked Eminem with his Top Cow Millarworld series **Wanted**.

This week's snowballing mentions – from **The Sunday Times** to MTV – are a case study in how to launch successful spin based on very little, authored by Mark Millar and friends, where hype generates its own hype. And damned if I'm not jealous.

The Sunday Times article that confirmed the story only appeared in Scottish editions of the newspaper. However, on Millar's website the difference is not noticeable. The article was written by Sanay Bosko, with whom Millar has placed previous hyping stories for **Superman** and **The Authority**. This follows on from stories placed in the Scottish **Sunday Mirror**, that again reported firm details (or erroneous tabloid puffery – take your pick) that Millar expressed bemusement about, yet was the original source for.

So how did the **Wanted**/Eminem story come about? Like Samuel Jackson appearing in **The Ultimates** as Nick Fury, Millar had JG Jones 'cast' Eminem as the star in the visuals of the comic. Millar's not been shy of dropping hints to the right people as to the cinematic future of the project starring the famed rapper, whether valid or not.

He then used printed reports of the project in the tabloid press as a self-fulfilling strategy when pitching the comic as a film option, while in public has brushed them off as mere frippery as if he's the first to hear about them. This week he stated that the Scottish **Sunday Times** had simply broken an embargo on the story, yet it's believed Millar knew full well the article was running last week.

Universal has announced it has optioned **Wanted** as a movie. Eminem is nowhere to be seen, was never involved with the project, his people deny any connection and announced he wasn't doing any more movie projects for quite a while.

Wanted is a best-selling comic and has reached impressive sales figures without any previous iterations of the character. As a creator-owned comic, it has broken through barriers that haven't been smashed since the Cliffhanger line launched.

Like I said, I'm jealous. Nice one, Mark.

Hey, Kids! Comics!

Marvel's attempt to make its Marvel Universe line very child-friendly again is apparently being driven by Gui Kayro and Dan Buckley. It was part of their publishing plan to Ike Perlmutter, to make the Marvel Universe as kid-friendly as possible and as commercially viable and safe for licenses as they can. The only concessions they've given editorial, some of whom are

continued on next page...

Net sightings

Negima exposure

Del Rey, the large American paperback publisher is about to enter the manga market in the US, but has managed to upset its target audience almost immediately.

One of their first publications will be ***Negima****, a series by the creator of the enormously popular* ***Love Hina****, Ken Akamatsu. However, Akamatsu revealed in his weblog that, to his disappointment, Del Rey would be censoring the book, to cover up some minor nudity (*Networks *would reprint a portion of his diary, but unfortunately it's a little difficult translating Japanese pages with a computer program, and the results are totally nonsensical at times!).*

Immediately the manga fan boards lit up, forcing Del Rey's Dallas Middaugh to issue a statement on the subject:

In response to the questions about the artwork in **Negima Vol.1**, we did alter the art slightly in about ten panels, with the full knowledge of the artist. Please be assured that the panel changes do not affect the storyline in any way.

These changes were an editorial decision based on our goal as a publishing house to get Ken Akamatsu's brilliant work into as many US bookstores as possible, and in no way reflects upon the quality of the original art.

Also, there were no changes made in **xxxHOLiC**, **Tsubasa**, or **Gundam SEED**. We, here at Del Rey, remain dedicated to producing the best manga possible.

However, this seemed not to pacify the masses, and 24 hours later, Middaugh issued the following statement:

Negima, **Vol.1: Magister Negi**, by Ken Akamatsu, will be published by Del Rey on April 27th, as scheduled, without any alterations to the author's original artwork and text. At the suggestion of one of our leading national book retailers, copies of **Negima** will be shrinkwrapped with a label that states: "Contains Explicit Content, Ages 16+" on the front of the book.

Which is a far more sensible way for the publisher to treat its audience, and guarantees boosting sales with a tease label like that!

Del Rey seems to be taking its readership seriously, it will certainly be interesting to see how it fares in the increasingly more crowded manga market.

Romita Jr on Big Guns

Amazing Spider-Man *artist John Romita Jr has announced on* Fanboy Radio *that he will be taking what he describes as a sabbatical from* ***Amazing Spider-Man****, starting after #508.*

However, he'll be staying at Marvel, and will be drawing Garth Ennis's ***Punisher****, and a run of* ***Wolverine****, with Mark Millar on scripts. It's presumed his* ***Wolverine*** *run will start in the summer and run for 12 issues, with his* ***Punisher*** *run starting in the autumn.*

Which left as a grey area how this would affect his possibly aptly-titled upcoming Image series... ***The Grey Area****.*

Moore movies

Networks *strays slightly into* Frame to Frame *territory next, as the following report went up on the* Ain't It Cool *website:*

After reviewing the script and casting of *Hellblazer*, comic kingpin Alan Moore has done the unthinkable. He's washed his hands of the entire debacle.

That's right – he's instructed DC not to credit him as the creator of the character. And putting his mouth where his money was, he has instructed that the royalties that he was splitting with his co-creators goes exclusively to the artists, [Rick] Veitch and [Steve] Bissette.

Often we hear about an artist upset that his creation has been butchered, but this is the first I can recall where the creator asked that both name and money be rejected. Moore is apparently so upset at the desecration done to Constantine by producer Lauren Shuler Donner that he is stating that he will never support a film project based on his work again.

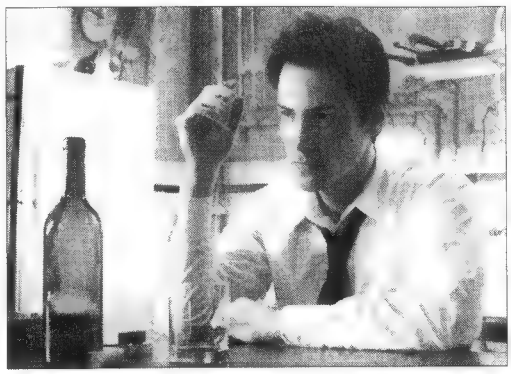
DC toady Paul Levitz is running around trying to get Moore to change his position, but Levitz is the one who had 30,000 copies of **League of Extraordinary Gentlemen** #5 pulped. The bad PR this move could create in the geek community is of grave concern to Warner Bros and DC Comics.

Neil Gaiman swiftly commented in his blog:

Which is really interesting, except for it not being true. Oh, it's true that Alan's rejected the money for *Constantine* and assigned it to his co-creators, but he's now done that for all films of his and things he's done that might one day be filmed.

This was because he was deeply hurt and offended and irritated by being accused, in the Larry Cohen lawsuit, of having written *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* as some kind of studio shill, and because Alan never does anything by

halves. Up until the lawsuit his position was that he didn't care about the films people made from his work, but was happy to cash the cheques; after, he decided that he didn't even want to cash the cheques. His share of *Constantine* was re-distributed among his co-creators, John Totleben, Steve Bissette and Rick Veitch and to Jamie Delano and John Ridgway. As far as I know, from having spoken to him, Alan's view on *Constantine* itself is the same as his view on *From Hell* and *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen,* which is that he'll probably rent the DVD one day – you never know, hell might freeze over – and that the important work is the comic. The main difference being here that the film is, from what I understand, mostly based on the Garth Ennis and Jamie Delano issues of the **Hellblazer** comic.



Above: *Keanu as Constantine, contemplates his cockney accent, "Woah! That Moore dude won't return my calls."*

And, for whatever remains of the record, Alan hasn't seen anything of *Constantine* – no scripts, no nothing. Nor has he had any contact with DC on it except for asking Karen Berger to redistribute the money and the credit. I tend to feel that the film-makers started with two strikes against them, simply by casting Keanu Reeves instead of, say, Jude Law, but everything I've heard since has been encouraging, so while I'll be sitting in the cinema with my arms folded and an "okay, convince me" attitude, I'll at least be going to see it.

...Mirroring most of comicdom's feeling, Networks *rather suspects.*

Despite the scrapped concept of a hi-tech 'Hellblazer-mobile' Keanu's hair colour still sets off far too many alarm bells.

Chris Bunting's COMICS WEBWORLD

Comic creators part two: Artists. Thanks to the intimacy of the internet, finding out more about – or even interacting with – the celebrities of the comic world is no longer wishful thinking. Last month I looked at writers' official sites, while this month the spotlight falls on artists, from indisputable industry legends to those likely to be one day. Next month: up-and-coming creators.

JOHN CASSADAY ***www.johncassaday.com***

One of the best creator websites by one of the best creators; but don't take my word for it, check the biography to see what the likes of Mark Waid, Warren Ellis and Alan Moore have to say about him. If that doesn't convince you, his gallery – featuring **Planetary**, **Captain America** and more – will. With style and substance, this site shows how it should be done. 8

WILL EISNER ***http://willeisner.tripod.com***

Read this pioneering creator's biography! Browse for his books in the Library! Jump to the John Law website! Delve into the Drawing Board! Worship him in the Shrine! Okay, so I made the last one up, but in actual fact that is the element missing the most: an interactive area for the vast army of fans that Eisner has accumulated during his sixty-year career through characters such as the Spirit and Fagin the Jew. 7

GLENN FABRY ***www.glennfabry.co.uk***

Slaine, **Thor**, **Sandman**, and of course, **Preacher**: this British artist has brought his highly-respected talent to bear on them all. Featuring sketches, news and a biography, this site provides a good overview of the man, while the Q&A section will satisfy the more dedicated fan. Some updating is required, but Fabry can be forgiven, as he is clearly very busy doing what he does best. 7

JOHN McCREA ***http://ds.dial.pipex.com/town/way/xmi94/***

This Eisner Award Winner has worked on everything from Marvel UK's **Action Force** to DC's **Hitman**. His site offers all the usual trimmings – including the opportunity to buy original artwork – but the real feather in its cap is Script to Stall, which demonstrates the writing-to-artwork creation process. Decent. 7

ALEX ROSS ***www.alexrossart.com***

With his attention to detail and life-like characters (which have been seen in everything from **Kingdom Come** to the covers of **TV Guide**), Alex Ross is one of the finest and most popular illustrators in comics, so it comes as no surprise that his website looks good. There's art for sale, a biography and my personal favourite, Ross-illustrated wallpapers for your PC. Recommended. 8

BARRY WINDSOR-SMITH ***www.barrywindsor-smith.com***

As soon as you arrive at this site you feel the distinctive artistic style of BWS, which is hardly surprising as he designed it. While some sites can be criticised for not offering enough, this is quite the opposite. But it actually works against it, as you're left with the impression of a jumbled affair. Still, to make amends we're treated to art from **Conan**, **Weapon X** and **OPUS**... and where else can you buy the original cover for **Fantastic Four** (Vol.2) #50? 7

Honourable mentions:
KEV HOPGOOD *[www.kevhopgood.co.uk]*, **SHERARD JACKSON** *[www.sherardjackson.com]* and **MIKE OEMING** *[www.mike-oeming.com]*

Rich Johnston's LYING IN THE GUTTER

continued from previous page...

as displeased about this as some of the creators, is the Marvel Knights and MAX lines. Hence the moving of several key, yet challenging, creative titles (**Hulk**, **X-Statix**, Millar's **Spider-Man** and more) to those lines.

And this week that policy exhibited itself in a number of ways. The firing of Igor Kordey for a style that is considered no longer acceptable for the launch of **Excalibur** and the redrawing of the first issues. His attitude to the return of superhero costumes probably didn't help.

...The decision to release specific Joss Whedon dialogue from **Astonishing X-Men**, designed to portray the future of the Marvel line, a return to costumes and more black and white (in gaudy colours) superheroics.

...The leak that Bob Morales will no longer be writing **Captain America**.

Look for the culmination of this policy at Marvel over the summer with what is only being called "The Bendis Event" in my earshot.

Image Matters

Right then. Image. I understand that Image's other founders, Marc Silvestri, Todd McFarlane and Erik Larsen met at Erik's instigation, to oust Jim Valentino as Publisher, while Jim was on vacation. And that Erik was given the job as a result. But why?

Rather than being told the reason, I've been told what's been filling the gossip rounds are not the primary reasons for the change. It's not because independent studios have been leaving. It's not because certain high profile titles have not been high profile enough. It's not because Image are fearing that come renegotiation, a marketshare below 5% will see them lose Premier Publisher status, and all the advantages and indeed survival, that brings. So if these aren't the primary reasons, then what is?

Certainly Jim Valentino did not leave his position voluntarily. And a number of Image Central creators have also offered a desire to follow Valentino if he moves elsewhere. There have been more rumours that Marc Silvestri and Top Cow will take over if Erik is unsuccessful in raising the prominence of the company, but Matt Hawkins of Top Cow denies that such a thing has even been discussed.

But that last line in the press release about Jim being encouraged to take a more creative role at Image? I don't think so.

Aradication

Expect some major changes for Marvel in the months to come. Cancellations of books you wouldn't expect.

The word I hear is that if there isn't a film deal in the offing for a title, then it had better have something bloody good going for it (basically high sales or an outreach publishing plan) to survive. If you're in the Top 20, fine. If you're not, and you're not a Spidey, X-title of something being pitched to Hollywood, well then... What future has **Avengers**? **Iron Man**? **Thor**? **Captain Marvel**? And I hear a Spidey book might be for the chop, too.

Naturally, all businesses are in it to make money. Marvel, however, has shown a past propensity to cancel books that are profitable - but just might not be as profitable as a different book. This attitude looks like it's returning.

However, it's combined with high profile events such as **Supreme Power** or **1602**, a lot of money, talent and promotion behind a major new comic with less ties to existing brands. While Marvel may be paring away certain sections from its publishing plans, it is planting new roots. As long as they're not creator-owned roots.

It looks as if this summer it's going to be all out war between DC and Marvel.

Reviews

Because few retailers allow titles to be read before purchase, ***Comics International****'s comprehensive reviews section enables comics readers to keep abreast of the wide range of titles currently being published and draw readers' attention to comics they might otherwise ignore. Naturally, this section is of even greater benefit to readers who rely solely on mail order, as they can only judge the quality of a title after purchase.*

Review codes: *Individual titles are judged against all similar comics past and present on a* ***1*** *to* ***10*** *basis, while a comparison is made against previous issues of the same title, ranging from <---> to <+++>. Hence, a quality comic may score an 8 against all others, but have slid from a previous issue's 9, denoted by <->. No change is marked <=>. We do not compare* ***Bone*** *with* ***X-Men****, but review each within their genre.*

Review panel: *Marco Antony (MA), Sam Ashurst (SA), Chris E. Bunting (CEB), Rob Cave (RC), Kelvin Green (KG), David Knight (DK), Scott Montgomery (SM), Keiron Mullens (KM), Ian Murphy (IM), Tom McSween (TM), Rob Nott (RN), Leonie O'Moore (LO), Matthew Robertson (MR), Andy Smith (AS), Terence Stewart (TS), Alex Thompson (MAT)*

CrossGen

Masters of the Universe: Rise of the Snake Men 3

by Staples & Tong + Roberts; CrossGen/MVCreations

<-> Writer Val Staples' trademark 'little character moments' are missing this issue, but maybe that's a deliberate creative decision on his part. A showdown as furious as this one between the Masters and the Snake Men would logically leave no room for such elements. As for the art team of Andie Tony and Jeremy Roberts, there's nothing to criticise. Paradoxically it's the lack of those little moments that really allows them to cut loose. (CEB) 7

Space Ace 3

by Kirkman & Miyaura + Norbert; CrossGen/MVCreations

<-> What matter is so important that it could take villain Borf away from witnessing the demise of his mortal enemy, Space Ace? Universal domination, what else? As for Ace and Kimberly, they aren't finished off that easily, but their troubles are far from over. Good natured adventure-fun based on the cult videogame. (CEB) 6

Dark Horse

Conan 1

by Busiek & Nord + Stewart

<=> When done well, Conan has a lot of potential. Early 70s Marvel treated the Conan stories with style and reverence and now 30 years on Dark Horse seems committed to do the same. The art and colouring look wonderful. It's not just the line work, it's the attention to detail in everything from the weapons and armour to the landscapes and architectural designs (particularly evident in the 25c preview issue). Plot wise we have the cream of the REH stories to look forward to, so I can't imagine this is going to be anything other than an extremely good comic book. (RN) 7

The Escapist 1

by various

Dark Horse gets its own faux-Golden Age superhero as it publishes the "lost adventures" of Michael Chabon's The Escapist from his Pulitzer Prize winning novel. Various comics luminaries step up to illustrate the strips for this anthology: Kyle Baker creates a farcical version of the hero, whilst Howard Chaykin and Steve Lieber's are more straight-forwardly heroic and Jim Starlin pastiches himself for a cosmic Luna Moth tale. Overall it's light-hearted fare, but perhaps the nostalgia is hampered by the very modern reproduction values of the comic. (MAT) 7

The Goon 5

by Powell

<+> The Goon leads a ragtag band of unsightly pals in a rescue attempt to save the tortured and eternally cursed ex-Sheriff of Lonely Street. With its rather downbeat ending and chilling cut-scenes this is a surprisingly sombre episode of Eric Powell's comical horror series. Fortunately he balances this with a psychic seal, moronic thugs, cross-dressing werewolves and the usual truck-load of zombies all executed in his Mignola-esque style. (MAT) 8

Hellboy: Weird Tales 7

by various

<--> Given that this is an anthology title, it has four opportunities to impress in one issue; but this month it blows every one. A haunted plane story, a plague of zombies, and a solo tale featuring Johann all miss the mark by a mile. Maybe the Nazi mad scientists from *Theatre of the Dead* should have featured more prominently. The luck of the draw makes this a below-par issue. (DK) 3

DC Comics

Aquaman 15

by Pfeifer & Gleason

<+> After the false start to Aquaman's new series under Rick Veitch, a new team jumps on board, and it's all hand to the deck. San Diego falls beneath the ocean, burying and drowning thousands, and a familiar looking Aquaman shows up to help. No more straggly beard, and a nice orange shirt and green tights. He seems to have a water hand now, instead of the hook, but I have no idea what that's about. Will Pfeiffer writes a fast read, but with sufficient mystery and suspense to pique interest, while Patrick Gleason provides some nice visuals. (TS) 6

Batman 624

by Azzarello & Risso

<=> Batman catches up with Angel Lupo in the penultimate part of *Broken City*. Brian Azzarello's run on Batman is up there with anything Frank Miller did with the character – so it's fitting that the Mutant Gang of Dark Knight Returns seems to make an appearance here. And any comic that contains a line worthy of Raymond Chandler – "Pointing a gun like..." is worth picking up in my book. (SA) 9

<=> *Broken City* is an impressively moody piece of work, capturing the required mix of crime noir grimness with the gothic urban surrealism that we expect from the locations. While nothing on display in this comic is particularly new, Azzarello nevertheless manages to pull all the right levers and deliver a good quality Bat saga. This is far better than I ever expected it would be. (RN) 7

Batman Adventures 11

by Templeton + Slott & Burchett + Beatty

<=> *Poker Face* sees Batman taking on the Riddler once again, but the Dark Knight is in no mood to play games. Edward Nygma is now a supposedly respectable business man, but the Prince of Puzzles can't resist setting up some deadly mindbenders for the Caped Crusader to solve. An engaging Batman tale for younger fans. (SM) 8

Batman: Gotham Knights 50

by Lieberman & Barrionuevo + Portela

<++> A.J. Lieberman of Harley Quinn fame takes over as writer, and manages a Batman story of a high standard, and one in which the writer's voice does not intrude at that. The art team of Al Barrionuevo and Francis Portela do a fine job too. 'Hush' makes threats against The Riddler in Blackgate Prison. The Joker's in it too, and it appears he's a man of means. (DK) 7

Birds of Prey 64

by Simone & Benes + Lei

<=> Black Canary, Shiva and Cheshire fight Chinese gangs, oblivious that Oracle – prisoner of Savant's crew – suffers interrogation. The Chinese mercenary strand, full of fighting scenes, feels drawn out and aimless, but Gail Simone's scripting of Oracle's detention is intriguing enough to maintain interest here. Ed Benes' pencils seem lacking in subtlety and stifled in their flow but it's far from bad; it just doesn't move me. I expect memorable plotting from Gail Simone, but there's not enough of it here. (IM) 5

Caper 4

by Winick & Dalrymple

<+> Oz realises that Jake and Izzy are moving against him and strikes first; grim scenes of brutality and torture, a couple of hot twists and a smart ending bring the first arc of this so-good title to a close. It will be too bad if this book doesn't have the legs: so far Judd Winick's scripts have been sharp illuminating arrows into a viper's nest of organised crime, with Farel Dalrymple's sketchy artwork moodily appropriate for these brutal tales. After four big hits from four issues, #5's new arc, with a new setting, will be a great jumping on point. (IM) 8

Caper 5

by Winick & Severin

<-> In 1977, Jacob Weiss's granddaughter is attorney to the stars, defending film star John Hawks – who may have killed his glamorous wife. Judd Winick's snappy script is the highlight of this book, and clearly shows changes in language, speech structure and psychology when writing for a more contemporary period, but he needs to flesh out these new characters. John Severin's pencils and inks adds old-fashioned charm and a layer of mystery, enhanced by Guy Major's evocative colour palette. (IM) 7

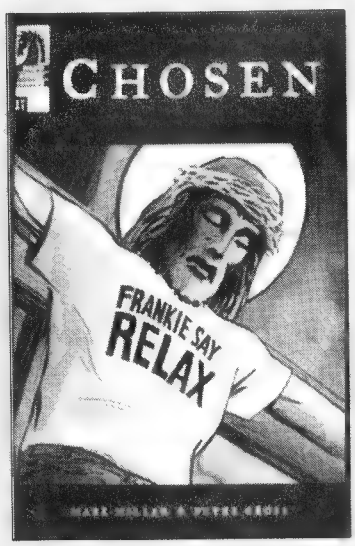
Fables 19

by Willingham + Buckingham & Leialoha; Vertigo

<=> Red Riding Hood escapes from the adversary, but finds only a lukewarm welcome. Bill Willingham's writing shows a great deal of pleasure in this book, neatly moving it on into new areas whilst developing old themes. Mark Buckingham's artwork has a wonderful grasp for the more surreal and macabre moments that set this impressive title apart. (IM) 7

The Chosen 1

by Millar & Gross



Around 1982, following his escape from a terrifying accident, Jodie Christianson discovers he's the Messiah. Mark Millar and Peter Gross skilfully evoke the period even though the mise en scene borrows heavily from *Stand By Me* and takes cheeky shortcuts via Rubik's cube and a reference to the Commodore 64. The art's fine, and nowhere more so than in the spread with the falling truck. (DK) 8

It's a concept that has been done before – most recently on terrestrial TV – but Millar has chosen to tackle the subject of a contemporary second coming of Jesus in his own style. This is a very different body of work to Saviour, his debut title for Trident, and as I believe Mr Millar is a committed Christian, the handling of the subject matter should prove different than the atheistic versions we've seen before. A subdued first issue, but it promises an interesting (if short) storyline. (RN) 7

Fables 20

by Willingham + Buckingham & Leialoha; Vertigo

<=> Red Riding Hood's reunion with Boy Blue encourages suspicion in Bigby, while Prince Charming's plot to get hold of Bluebeard's fortune sees him enter politics. Bill Willingham's surreal tales continue to engage, and with both Snow White and Bigby's characters elucidated here these twisted tales have a strong sense of personality at their heart. Mark Buckingham's quirky but grounded artwork fits this odd balance of fantasy, soap, comedy and psychological horror – their union ensures a consistently enjoyable read. (IM) 7

Fables 21

by Willingham & Buckingham + Leialoha; Vertigo

Jack tries to sell magic beans and gets worked over when he admits he doesn't really have any, while Mayor Cole is worked up trying to undermine Prince Charming's election campaign. Bill Willingham infuses plenty of humour into his sometimes too gentle scripts, but Mark Buckingham's considered depicture always ensures that the darker side of Fables is also within view. Although unenthused by the current plot, the script is strong enough to maintain this reader's interest. (IM) 6

Fables 22

by Willingham & Akins + Palmiotti; Vertigo

<-> Is Cinderella an agent of the Adversary? Bill Willingham reveals more of Bigby's cunning, unfortunately for Ichabod Crane, but entertains the readers most royally when Prince Charming's three (known) ex-wives meet up. Tony Akins' fill-in pencils, honed by Jimmy Palmiotti's inks, do a decent job of imitating Mark Buckingham and Steve Leialoha – to their credit, I wonder how many readers will notice the difference? All-in-all this is an enjoyable but seemingly non-essential issue. (IM) 6

Gotham Central 16

by Brubaker & Scott

<+> Still reeling from The Joker's slaughter, Gotham's finest finds a body in a skip. Ed Brubaker, handling the writing chores alone, encourages Greg Scott's passionate artwork to engender moving funeral scenes and effectively convey scenes of vicious office rivalry. The moody, blues-y art is a feature of the book, but the strong script reminds readers that even major publishers can do non-superhero titles with style. (IM) 8

Hellblazer 193

by Carey & Frusin; Vertigo

<=> John Constantine averts the apocalypse again, with help from his niece Gemma. But what the hell is happening to the art/colouring? The pages of this book are now looking murky and the pencil work lacks some of the detail that we grew used to in previous issues. Mike Carey's scripts remain as good as ever, but the art is slowly letting the title down. (RN) 7

JLA 93

by O'Neil & Huat

Go back and read the classic Green Lantern/Green Arrow run by Dennis O'Neil and Neal Adams and you'll notice how badly these 'relevant' comics have aged. Strange, then, that O'Neil should assay a half-assed retread of his alien road-trip plot. Fortunate that he has now, as then, a dazzling and innovative collaborator. Tan Eng Huat's reckless design brilliance is suppressed for this book, as if he's not permitted to let rip as he was on his niche book, Doom Patrol. The A-list heroes look peculiar, with their bean-shaped heads and facial quirks, but Tan does some lovely tricks with Plastic Man. Bugger the relevance, just enjoy the view. (MA) 6

Legion 30

by Abnett + Lanning & Batista

<+> *Foundations* concludes without any noticeable consequence to the last six issues of sound and fury (but very little substance). Batista urgently needs to work on his composition to highlight what is important (especially during the numerous fight scenes, as they are confused and tiresome), while DNA need to improve their dramatic structure to prevent the Legion descending into a mindless series of events without tension. (TS) 4

The Losers 9

by Diggle & Jock; Vertigo

<=> The team gathers after its downtime to decide on the next move. This storyline seems to be moving at a more measured pace than the previous one, and appears to be a bit more complex too. It's good to see Andy Diggle refuse to settle into a formula, and Jock's art is of course wonderful, in a scritchy-scratchy kind of way. (KG) 8

My Faith in Frankie 2

by Carey & Liew + Hempel

<-> Can personal God Jeriven compete with Dean Baxter for Frankie's devotion? High jinks and a few great laughs in this surreal, sublime comedy drama that is shrewdly written by Mike Carey, with charming, appropriate and sometimes dreamily wonderful art from Sonny Liew. This comic remains a highlight of my month. Terrific! (IM) 8

Plastic Man 3

by Baker

<+> Plastic Man's criminal alter-ego stands revealed by a determined FBI agent, but how do you arrest someone made of rubber? Cue various scenes of slapstick humour and acetone throwing. Kyle Baker hits his stride script-wise, with enough gags, witty asides and mickey-taking to breath life into this septuagenarian character. He even satirises the JLA and Batman's glum nature, all of which is conjured up in his bright '60s style cartoony artwork. (MAT) 8

Robin 123

by Willingham & Rodriguez De La Fuente + Sowd

<+> Can Robin and Spoiler bring Johnny Warlock's fledgling villainy to a halt? I'm not enthusiastic for this villain, whose powers seem lazily and conveniently ill-defined. Francsico Rodriguez De La Fuente's (whose name alone takes up half my word count) strong visual linework emphasises the brutality and mania of Warlock, and is well-suited to Aaron Sowd's bleak inks with Guy Major's colours also deserving praise. This entertaining, if unexceptional, climax may be remembered more for the artwork than for proving Bill Willingham

Coup d'Etat 1: Sleeper

by Brubaker & Lee; WildStorm

Jim Lee kicks off the latest WildStorm crossover bringing attention to Ed Brubaker's critically acclaimed title. The manipulative Tao kick-starts the USA's inter-dimensional space programme, which inadvertently leads to the destruction of an alien spaceship and most of Florida. Of course these kinds of events cause The Authority to intervene in typically heavy-handed manner. Lee's looser pencilling and rough inks look much more interesting than his slick Batman work, whilst Brubaker's script sets up an intriguing series. (MAT) 8

Coup D'Etat 2: Stormwatch: Team Achilles

by Wright & D'Anda; WildStorm

<=> The UN anti-superhuman team rushes in to end the reign of terror of a suspiciously familiar Eastern-European metal-clad dictator just as The Authority takes control of the USA, making the clash of personalities inevitable. Micah Ian Wright is at his satirical best, ripping into another familiar world leader and The Authority's rather pompous side. Carlos D'Anda gets a break from drawing Lego toys, producing some brutal scenes, messy tech and stylish designs, making this reviewer wish he could stay for the long haul. (MAT) 7

Coup D'Etat 3: Wildcats Version 3.0

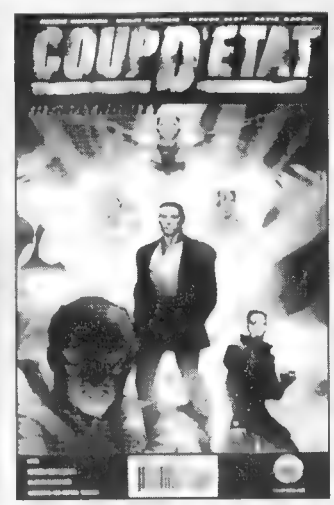
by Casey & Garza + Scott; WildStorm

<-> With The Authority taking over the USA, how will ex-Wildcats Grifter and Marlowe (who himself is subtly making his own bid on international power structures) react? Whilst Grifter goes for the traditional 'blast them out of the sky' option, his team-mate opts to confront the intransigent group personally and show them the error in their ways. Although this episode doesn't have the dynamic action of the others in this crossover, Joe Casey makes some intriguing points about superheroics and Ale Garza does a decent enough Joe Madureira imitation. (MAT) 6

Coup D'Etat 4: The Authority

by Morrison & Portacio + Scott; WildStorm

<—> The WildStorm crossover "event" ends in a whimper with fears about the state of The Authority relaunch intensified. If you thought Dwayne Turner's artwork was awful, take another look at Whilce Portacio's! It's full of the bad storytelling, awkward panel pacing, crude facial features and overall sketchy pencilling that for some reason made him a big name a while ago. Robbie Morrison's script isn't much better, attempting to mimic the clever big-screen ethic of his predecessors, yet not half as witty nor willing to let the art speak for itself. A real wasted opportunity. (MAT) 3



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can still cut it on a superhero title. (IM) 7

Rose and Thorn 3

by Simone & Melo + Green

<-> Dr Chritlow plays unpleasant games with pyromaniac Ashleigh, and Rhosyn is questioned as to how she's coping outside the hospital. Gail Simone's writing is unexceptional, allowing Adrian Melo's powerful visuals to remain the focus of this book, ably enhanced by the impressive Dan Green's inks and coming together superbly on the scenes inside Rhosyn's head. David Finch et al could learn much from their approach to hair, for starters, which usually looks less artificial here. (IM) 5

Wonder Woman 201

by Rucka & Davis

<+> A much needed step in the right direction, as Rucka ups the ante in the aftermath of Themyscira's destruction. Guest artist Shane Davis is a vast improvement on regular artist Drew Johnston, providing clear, action-packed visuals to complement Rucka's strong script. I am however still mystified as to how Diana stops the Tsunami from laying waste to the Carolinas? Did she use her Wonder Scream, perchance? (TS) 6

Image

Common Grounds 2

by Hickman & Jurgens + Van Sciver + Vey; Top Cow

Analogue Guy tries to locate his missing partner, Digital Man – and has waitress Jenny made a mistake offering a customer a lift. Troy Hickman writes tales of life in every superpowered person's favourite coffee shop, like *Friends* meets Super-Hero Happy Hour; unfortunately the latter has sharper scripts and more innovative art, but for a series trying to sell the idea to a mainstream audience this works fine. Ethan Van Sciver's art is modestly fetching, but emotionally ham-fisted, especially on the doll-like faces. What Dan Jurgens' pencils lack in sophistication they make up for in narrative technique. (IM) 4

Invincible 8

by Kirkman & Ottley

It's the Guardian of the Globes' funeral, but Robert Kirkham's pleasurable script isn't morbid, with the service providing the opportunity for some fun sequences and satire of superhero comic conventions without feeling disrespectful to the fallen – quite the feat. This wry comic isn't as gut-bustingly funny as some would have you think, but it does have a memorably warm, affectionate humour. Ryan Ottley's pencils and inks are enjoyably crisp and angular but struggle to develop atmosphere and backgrounds; nonetheless it's a fun read. (IM) 7

Rex Mundi 8

by Nelson & J + Cox

<=> Julien discovers another gruesomely murdered character, adding even more intrigue to the death of his friend and the mysterious cult of the Knights Templar, whilst his contact and ex-lover Genevieve might be closer to the ringleader than she suspects. Arvid Nelson continues to weave intriguing and complex plots for this conspiratorial murder mystery, while Jeromy Cox's textured

Y – The Last Man 19

by Vaughan & Guerra + Marzan Jr; Vertigo

<+++> Prisoner of a sexual sadist, Yorick reveals details of his first sexual encounters – with one of his male playpals – and his sordid fear of flies. Offering other painful insights in a sweaty, difficult issue makes for deeply uncomfortable reading, but all the better for that. Strengthened by the striking and psychologically taut union of Pia Guerra's visuals to Brian K. Vaughan's top-notch script, we have the best issue of this title in months. (IM) 8

<+> It's fun with ropes as Yorick finds himself naked and tied to a bed by a whip-wielding, satin-clad dominatrix who wants to play 'hide the sausage' with him. Although very little sausage hiding takes place (so far) the issue does serve to explore just how messed up the inside of Yorick's head really is. The insight into Yorick's fears and confused feelings about sex are thoughtful and well written, showing a mature approach that the series has lacked to date. (RN) 7

CGI colours manage to hide the occasional stiff composition of Eric J's finely rendered artwork, evoking the mood and setting of an alternate 1930s Paris perfectly. (MAT) 8

Savage Dragon 113

by Larsen

<=> The move to heavier paper is a welcome improvement, particularly the card stock cover. Storywise, it's business as usual, as Openface and Octopus attempt to assassinate Dragon with some ingenious robotic contraptions: a dumb-looking one with guns; and a cool one with tentacles. As ever, back-up strips of Mighty Man and Chris Giarrusso's Comic Bits provide good support. (DK) 6

Marvel

Amazing Spider-Man 504

by Straczynski + Avery & Romita Jr + Hanna

Spidey teams up with Loki to battle mystical stalker Morwen. This is lightweight, as not a lot goes on, but it's well-written and there's an inspired justification for Loki and Spidey's alliance. Art wise, John Romita Jr, Scott Hanna and Matt Milla do excellent work. (KG) 9

Avengers 78

by Austen & Coipel + Lanning

<=> Single mum Kelsey Leigh continues to

New X-Men 153

by Morrison & Silvestri + various

<=> The final battle begins and The Phoenix gets ready to destroy the new New X-Men. In a way, I'm glad Grant Morrison is coming to the end of his run. It's always best to go out on top – and this is as good as it gets. As always, this issue is full of lovely moments; from the reappearance of the 'fastball special', to the moving conclusion to the Rover plotline, to the 'sun' coming up. And Marc Silvestri's art is phenomenal – the best artist Morrison has worked with on this title. Needless to say, this is essential. (SA) 9

<+> Morrison's future tale gets more confusing and difficult to read as it nears its conclusion. Seven X-Men prepare to assault Beast's base whilst an army of crawlers attack the X-Men's place. Increasingly unfathomable, it's hard to see how this will all make sense in next issue's conclusion. Silvestri's art is striking to behold, sometimes vigorously beautiful, and as strong in the inking as in the pencils (which could show many others how to embellish linework), so it sucks that I can make such little sense of the plot. (IM) 7

<-> 150 years into the (possible) future, the Beast has supposedly gone bad, the Phoenix has hatched, Cassandra Nova (Chuck's evil twin sister) is leading a rag tag team of X-Men, and sundry anonymous mutants are running around. Honestly, I tried, but this was one of the most confusing comics I've read in awhile (after Superman 200). Disjointed, obscure dialogue, coupled with Silvestri's inarticulate art, left me scratching my head. (TS) 4

<-> The newly-hatched Phoenix goes about the future world leaving death and destruction in her wake; meanwhile Cassandra Xavier and Logan lead a ragtag band of mutants against the tyrannical Beast's cloned minions. It's perhaps unsurprising the number of inkers Silvestri requires, considering his flash-line laden and pointlessly detailed pages. However Morrison tailors the script to Silvestri's talents with plenty of dynamic battles and bio-mechanical creatures within the sinister dirty setting. But am I alone in being slightly confused by this final arc? (MAT) 7

defend the unconscious Captain America, with unpleasant results. Quite what the "battle of poetry" is about, I have no idea, and Chuck Austen's continual portrayal of Marvel's premiere superteam as a bunch of incompetent cretins is starting to grate. Still, the art team do another good job. (KG) 4

<+> This one has it all; drama, action, humour, mystery and pathos, as housewife Kelsey Leigh uses Cap's shield to defend both him and the Wasp from Thunderball's big, erm, ball, while indulging in a spot of philosophical banter. Some really nice art in places, but a word in yer shell-like, Chuck; sort out the kids dialogue will ya? The little girl saying "Most people wouldn't give two shillings for him" was just a tad suspect. (TS) 6

<-> Austen reminds us why he's so reviled amongst comics fans, as his dialogue becomes ever more stilted and individuals act out of character. The Avengers face off against The Wrecking Crew, but a floored Captain America leaves a protective mother alone facing an inexplicably eloquent Thunderball. Oddly, the team seems oblivious to the mother's efforts and remains jovial rather than rushing to save innocent British bystanders. Olivier Coipel's artwork doesn't look much better either. (MAT) 5

Avengers 79

by Austen & Chen

<-> The team tries its best to deal with its loss, to varying success. Chuck Austen tries to sell us on the idea of The Avengers as an issue-based superhero comic, but the rampant unsubtlety of his writing makes that crash and burn. Sean Chen fills in on pencils and delivers solid but uninspired work. (KG) 3

<=> An interlude moment, and a chance for Austen to flex his soap opera muscles. Captain America behaves like a bit of a chump, the Wasp and Yellowjacket are going over some old history, again, and Hawkeye gets dumber. Not a bad thing by any means, but Chen's art is woefully inadequate in conveying convincing emotion, let alone normal looking people. Cap looks as if he's suffering from piles in one panel. (TS) 5

Captain America 23

by Morales & Bachalo + Townsend; Marvel Knights

<-> Cap follows six Guantanamo escapees directly into Cuba – but is their real target Cuba, or America? Robert Morales uses contemporary politics as the starting point for our hero's adventures, not to force opinions at readers (as some will have feared), but risks holding the plot back. Chris Bachalo's pencil and colour work feel appropriate for this murky, uncertain world. Anatomy, facial structure may be his weakness, but this doesn't spoil the vibrant art for me. He develops moods to illuminate the writing rather than compete with it to show off his own work: great teamwork. (IM) 7

<=> A team of inkers is called upon to finish Bachalo's busy artwork, but fortunately the styles compliment the penciller, whose clever use of colours and photomontages are slowly winning me over. Morales' scripting continues to shine, as he sends Cap on a search for the escaped terrorist detainees. In an odd turn of events, Nick Fury inexplicably turns up with Fidel Castro... (MAT) 7

Captain Marvel 19

by David & Lopresti + Sotomayor

<-> After the lightning pace and shocking revelations of previous issues, Peter David lets us catch our breath with a set-up story involving the return of Marlo... well, Marlos, plural. Aaron Lopresti proved himself a formidable artist on CrossGen's Mystic, but seems slightly out of place here. Maybe it's simply a case of such a noticeable style change from Paul Azaceta. Now, if only Gary Frank could be persuaded to become regular penciller. (CEB) 8

Crimson Dynamo 6

by Miller & Corroney

I had such high hopes for this series, but it seems that while John Jackson Miller has some fantastic plot ideas (Crimson Dynamo armour as a missing WMD) his realisation of them is empty, tired and dull. Joe Corroney's art looks rushed and struggles to be 'competent' in places. Disappointing. (RC) 3

Daredevil 57

by Bendis & Maleev; Marvel Knights

<++> The Yakuza decides to depose Daredevil's reign of Hell's Kitchen – can our hero really survive when 100 top Yakuza fighters attack without warning? Alex Maleev's visceral art cranks up the tension with indigo rain-stained streets scenes occasionally illuminated by bursts of gunfire and tear gas clouds. This is painful to look at, in the way violence should be, but without ever being gory or sensationalist, and shows that pencil, inks and colours man Alex Maleev is at the top of his game. The lengthy, dense battle dominates the issue, but is still well-scripted by the wonderful Brian Michael Bendis. (IM) 8

<-> If cracks are showing in recent issues of Ultimate FF and The Pulse, they certainly aren't here. Bendis continues to make Daredevil his own with another outstanding episode of this long running saga. At risk of repeating myself again, Daredevil maintains a consistent level of excellence that most comics struggle to reach just for a couple of issues. Bendis and Maleev are as perfectly suited to this title as Peter Jackson was to *Lord of the Rings*. (RN) 8

<+> Ben Ulrich recounts Matt Murdock's year as the Kingpin of Hell's Kitchen, reaching a turning point encounter with some antagonistic Yakuza. Any concerns that Maleev was merely a talking heads artist are renounced as he delivers another gripping showdown fight in his gritty gothic style. Bendis is renowned at capturing realistic dialogue and he doesn't fail here, setting up a shocking last page that'll leave you reeling. (MAT) 8

Fantastic Four 509

by Waid & Wieringo + Kesel

<=> The Fantastic Three set about 'reviving' the Thing in yet another story in which writer Mark Waid makes the long and complex history of this title serve as a strength, all the while adding his own, fresh approach. Forget reborn ultimate knights, this is the real deal! (CEB) 8

Marvel 1602 #7

by Gaiman & Kubert + Isanove; Marvel Knights

<=> The various characters make their way to the New World for the climax. And really that's all that happens. The interest here is in the script rather than the plot, as information is given and realisations are made, including one shocking cliffhanger. Andy Kubert and Richard Isanove again make this one of the best-looking comics available. (KG) 8

<++> Dr Strange awaits his execution, Magneto takes his revenge on the Catholic Church, the Phoenix rises and all the main players move to America for the climax. This issue is bristling with revelations, hints and fascinating diversions and deserves to lure back any who dropped this title for moving too slow. Kubert's art still struggles to depict so much in so few pages, looking best on the very rare splash pages, but Richard Isanove's inks are able to bring out the best of the menacing woodland scenes. Neil Gaiman's

The Pulse 1

by Bendis & Bagley + Hanna

J.J. Jameson recruits Alias's Jessica and Ben Urich to report for a new superhero section of The Daily Bugle. Continuing where the wonderful Alias left off, but in a PSR book, Jessica and Luke Cage's impending parenthood is to be a focus of the new section, which will be more amiable to superheroics. Mark Bagley draws a fine Jameson, but Frank D'Armata and Brian Reber's colours confuse the office scenes, making for messy visuals. Brian Michael Bendis struggles to ensnare reader interest in this first issue, which establishes the set-up, but the ending suggests this will be one crazy ride! (IM) 6

I've re-read this comic three times hoping to find some glimmer of hope in the Alias re-launch, but sadly can find nothing that even approaches the level of the previous series. The Pulse reads like a dried up husk – the art is poor, and when you consider this is a relaunch, Bagley is an extremely bad choice to try and attract new readers with. None of the chemistry or characterisation from Alias remains. Not only doesn't Jessica Jones look like Jessica Jones, but she doesn't sound or act the same either. I am very, very disappointed. Alias was exceptional and original. This is pedestrian at best. (RN) 5

Jessica Jones returns under a new title looking at life of newspaper reporters in a city of superpowered individuals. Compared to Alias the amount of cursing is diminished, but the greater loss is that of Michael Gaydos's moody and realistic artwork. Instead Bendis works with Bagley, whose bright and breezy style is more suited to antics of the teenage Ultimate Spider-Man than this more mature work. Even the now-pregnant Jessica seems to have lost several stone. (MAT) 7

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twisting tale heads for a pulsating finale that should satisfy patient readers. (IM) 8

Mystique 11

by Vaughan & Garcia + Fernandez

When a father is accused of abducting his mutant son, Forge and Mystique feel obliged to rescue the boy. Mark Mayhew's cover is delectably painted, showing impressive talent but it wasted on a deliberate and offensive mix of dangerous sexual and violent imagery, an exploitative element also reflected in Manuel Garcia's interior art which undermines the striking visuals and any sense of the powerful, independent woman that Mystique should be. Brian K. Vaughan's plot is ho-hum, lit only by flashes of invention but this isn't enough to over-ride the title's seedy, soft-porn flavours. (IM) 6

New Mutants 8

by DeFilippis + Weir & Barberi + Randolph

<-> It's parents' week at Xavier's, leading to scenes of tension, chaos, love and prejudice. Whoever worked the second half of the book (presumably Khary Randolph) used a bubble-headed manga style that doesn't sit well; it feels forced and gives emotional scenes sledge-hammer subtlety. While the first half sometimes offers awkward human composition, it's still more pleasing. Fortunately it continues to be well-scripted by Nunzio DeFilippis and Christina Weir and includes several amusing background images that the casual reader might easily miss. (IM)6

New Mutants 9

by DeFilippis + Weir & Barberi

<--> Wolfsbane returns, but very different to the Rahne that Xavier's knew. Now an adventurous biker, she encourages students to aid a dangerous mutant. Hopefully Rahne's transformation will be given a credible history, otherwise the writers should have brought in a new character rather than an inexplicable revamp. Carlo Barberi's pencils are too cute and struggle to impress the danger of the mission, leading me to wonder how 'light' this book wants to be. Disappointing. (IM) 5

The Punisher 3

by Ennis & Larosa; MAX Comics

<=> Micro reveals his master plan – while Nicky, Pittsy and Ink start their search for Frank. Further proof that Ennis is a genius – bringing back Micro was a masterstroke that really pays off in this issue, just check out the scene where he shows Frank pictures of his family. There's a lot of focus on minor characters this month, but with support this good, you won't be complaining. Brilliant. (SA) 9

Runaways 11

by Vaughan & Miyazawa + Newbold

<-> Cloak and Dagger are hired to rescue the 'kidnapped' Molly, but soon realise it's not the Runaways who are trouble. While the final panel is the funniest moment in this month's comics, Takeshi Miyazawa's pencils are generally grimier but, sadly, less facially emotive and more sexually charged than his predecessor's. Brian K Vaughan's plot is so far light and insubstantial – we need stronger storylines if Runaways is to endure. (IM) 6

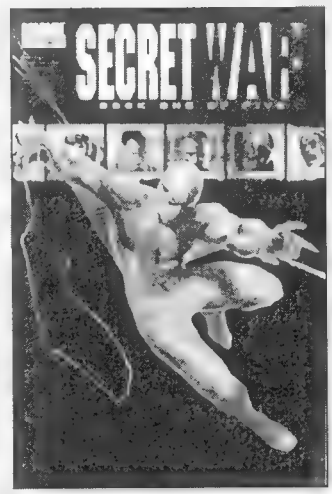
Runaways 12

by Vaughan & Miyazawa + Newbold

<+> Cloak and Dagger take on Arsenic, Old Lace and Bruiser in a violent but fun fight sequence full of witty lines that feel natural and organic, not latched on for laughs. Brian K Vaughan's plot, however, feels forced at times, with uses of powers that make little sense excepting that they move the plot forward in the way he wants. Fortunately the bitter-sweet ending ensures a strong finish. Takeshi Miyazawa'a pencils are improving (although I'd prefer more detail), which inker David Newbold seems more at ease with. (IM) 7

Secret War 1

by Bendis & Dell'Otto



Just where do Marvel's minor villains get the money for their hi-tech equipment? Despite being on the cover, there's no Spider-Man in this issue. No Wolverine, no Fantastic Four, no Hulk. In fact, the biggest star here is Nick Fury – which considering the hype of 'the biggest Marvel crossover ever,' not to mention the three-month gap between issues, makes this a bit of a disappointment. And is it just me, or is terrorism the new communism in terms of faceless enemy lame plot device? Still, the art is superb. (SA) 7

When an unknown figure knocks Luke Cage into a coma, you know a powerful trouble's brewing. Gabriel Dell'Otto's painted art is glorious, striking and moving, marking him out as a major new talent. Brian Michael Bendis pulls together a likely plot, investigating how so many small-time crooks have such expensive weaponry, and while this script is full of start-up detail I expect it to go roaring off next issue. (IM) 8

Bendis's single-handed scripting of the whole of the Marvel Universe continues, as he takes on this rather history-laden title. Fortunately few Jacko-permed superbeings appear, instead Bendis looks at the intriguing idea of SHIELD probing where all those petty super-villains get their funding. Dell'Otto creates some moody fully painted artwork, but his work is less the clean Alex Ross approach and more in the vein of a slightly pretentious early-90's graphic novel. (MAT) 7

Sentinel 12

by McKeever & Vriens

<+> Agent Rinehart takes the Sentinel on – can Juston rescue the situation before they find his name in the programming? The poignant ending gives promise of a sequel, which sadly seems unlikely. Sean McKeever's scripts have been consistently good and the art enjoyable, so it's a sad farewell to this light but once promising book. (IM) 6

Ultimate X-Men 42

by Bendis & Finch + Thibert

<+> The President's advisors worry that the public thinks he's under Xavier's influence, so advisor Emma Frost recruits a Governmental mutant team. Although Brian Michael Bendis' plot is boggy, I'm down on this issue more for David Finch's facial art; his heavy depictions of hair are becoming irritating, his garden scenes look unreal. The art is further hindered by Art Thibert's plodding inking and Frank D'Armata's gaudy colours. If Finch could give these details the same treatment his wider picture scenes get – usually incredibly well put together – he would deserve the praise he receives. (IM) 6

Ultimate Fantastic Four 3

by Millar + Bendis & Kubert + Miki

<+++> With his experiment gone wrong, due to Damme' intervention or his own mistake, Reed Richards' body is horrifically transformed (and terrifyingly portrayed) and the race is on to find out if the others are dead or blown to who-knows-where. Following issue 2's disappointments this title is back on exhilarating form, well plotted by Brian Michael Bendis (though less well characterised, perhaps due to Mark Millar) and ably pencilled by Adam Kubert, with Danny Miki's inks strong on emphasis. But Dave Stewart's colours are brash and meaty, and the only major failing of the issue. (IM) 8

<-> Are Bendis and Millar beginning to feel overstretched? The third issue of FF has nothing special about it. The trademark wit, realism and clever reworking of established backgrounds seems second rate this month. It retreads old/new ground at such a brisk pace that I can only assume an impending deadline must have forced the writers to churn out material which doesn't match their usually excellent standards. An average superhero comic when we expect far more from talents such as these. (RN) 6

<+> The youthful scientists finally get their powers after a fateful explosion with their teleportation platform, now all they need to do is find each other! Millar and Bendis's present-day adaptation of Marvel's first family subtly alters events and situations, but keeps the characters pretty much as we know them. With his inventive use of panel layouts and novel depiction of their newfound powers, Kubert continues to impress. But what's more remarkable is that Marvel allows Bendis another letters page to poke fun at the fans! (MAT) 7

Uncanny X-Men 438

by Austen & Larroca + Miki

<+> Tension between the Cabot and Guthrie families flare up, and with Sheriff Pete in league with the Cabots it's no even playing field. Chuck Austen has rarely written more convincing dialogue, and his characterisation of minor characters is equally solid. The Romeo and Juliet story is playing quietly, but even these emotional notes are finely tuned and gently moving. Danny Miki's inks are less laboured here, releasing powerful emotive chords from Salvadore Larroca's art, again effectively scored by Udon's moving colours. This is shaping up as Austen's best X-Men arc yet. (IM) 8

Uncanny X-Men 439

by Austen & Larroca + Miki

<--> Austen's Romeo and Juliet plot takes centrestage, encumbered by flowery dialogue laden with convoluted therapy-speak that feels too informed and knowing for the teenagers of these educationally-bereft families. Salvadore Larroca has done better work: here there's little subtlety or flair to his pencils, hampered by brutish inks from Danny Miki. But there are still a couple of moving moments to maintain the promise of the previous two issues. (IM) 5

Uncanny X-Men 440

by Austen & Larroca + Miki

<--> Mrs Guthrie confronts Archangel on his feelings for Husk, with neither woman liking his initial answers. Pete's racism surfaces while Chester's men armour up and move on the Guthrie home. Though chiefly a character-based issue, there's minimal development of such. Danny Miki's inks again suffocate Salvador Larroca's varied pencils; UDON's colours give the art merit in places, but too much looks inhuman or leaden; for example, Archangel's feathers look like daggers, with his face inanimate, barely recognisable without costume. (IM) 4

<-> Chuck Austen reminds us why he's so reviled amongst comics fans, as his dialogue becomes ever more stilted and individuals again act out of character. The young lovers are interrupted by her embittered father, who takes the family feud to a whole new and implausible level by getting himself and his sons mecha-suits! Meanwhile Angel has a pukesome heart-to-heart with Husk over their relationship that wouldn't look out of place in a Mills & Boon. Larroca's and UDON's attractive artwork is wasted on this tripe. (MAT) 5

X-Men Unlimited 1

by Lee & Lai, Kaul & Mandrake

Tony Lee writes of Sage's pre-X-Men background in an unexceptional but blanks-filling tale ably illustrated by Ben and Rai Lee. JT Kaul then scripts Andy, a monstrous-looking young mutant, free reign outside the mansion on Halloween. Had this story had the full issue it might have been a stand-out feature, but instead it feels rushed and the would-be emotive plot fails to move the reader sufficiently because so little is known about this character; but Tom Mandrake's art offers vivid scenes with his hazy, moving sequences marking him out as a bright talent. (IM) 6

X-Statix 19

by Milligan & Allred + Crane

<=> Vivisector is tempted by a mysterious

scientist who claims he can cure Myles' "condition". This is well-written, as per usual, with more of the hilarious X-Statix wit and satire, but the plot underneath seems a bit flat. Still better than most of Marvel's other books, this does seem to be treading water again. (KG) 8

<=> Vivisector has the chance of a cure; but what motivates a scientist to help him? And will either X-Statix or his hot actor lover want the human Myles without his powers? The satire is pretty thin here and the politics more obvious, but there are still enough humorous asides and thoughtful pieces to make this enjoyable. Peter Milligan would do well to reach for more subtlety in his work here, but Nick Craine's inks pick up any slack, showing a strong grasp of mood and subject matter and effortlessly drawing out the best of Mike Allred's pencils. (IM) 6

X-Treme X-Men 40

by Claremont & Kordey + Adams

<++> When Bishop goes jogging alone, he is attacked by Bogan's forces. Writer Chris Claremont is working hard to keep this title in line with continuity across the X-titles, and this, plus some fun scenes that show his understanding of these characters, makes for one of his better issues of recent times. But the overall thrust of his plot is tiresome. Igor Kordey's artwork includes a memorable scene of Gambit and Rogue kissing, but is generally blunt and over-inked by Greg Adams. (IM) 5

X-Treme X-Men 41

by Claremont & Kordey + Adams

<++> Elias Bogan strives to brainwash Bishop, while the X-Men plot their response. I'm impressed with the quality of characterisation here as we gradually learn more about Sage and see the man in Cannonball emerge. But while Chris Claremont's script is improved, the plot is still too predictable. The art team has unexpectedly, improved too, with Bishop's scenes looking more refined and less evidence of the heavy inking that previously traumatised Igor Kordey's pencils – although his faces still look distorted and uncomfortable. Overall, a big improvement. (IM) 6

X-Treme X-Men 42

by Claremont & Kordey + Adams

<-> Cannonball recruits old allies to help fight Bishop, then sends the rest of the team to attack Bogan's mysterious telepath head-on. The battle scenes are confusing and difficult to understand; even now I'm baffled as to how the battle ended, for which I blame writer Chris Claremont. Igor Kordey's art remains unappealing, with Cannonball looking more fey than ever, Gambit barely recognisable and Skids looking absurdly sulky. Despite such flaws, his fight scenes are imaginatively arranged and show recognisable talent. (IM) 5

US Indies

Assembly 2

by Jackson & Hutchison; Antarctic Press

<+> Although the art is top-notch, the storyline comes across as a little implausible when Shon chooses to join the service following her sister's shock revelations. Still, this is a noticeable improvement on last issue, as Sherard Jackson fleshes out the characters further, and as a result makes this moody futuristic sci-fi more intriguing. (CEB) 6

X-Statix 18

by Milligan & Allred + Craine

<+> Despite the supposedly high-risk missions and quick turnover, there have been fewer deaths in this title than anticipated, but that changes this issue! It's tough making funerals funny, but acerbic writer Peter Milligan succeeds here; this is no mournful issue, as X-Statix uncover the secrets behind Henrietta's death. Mike Allred's art might look goofy on a regular superhero title but well matches the oddball take on this title. (IM) 7

<+> An insecure Myles attempts to 'normalise' himself by having his mutant gene removed by a manipulative scientist: will the team loose another member? Although playing to all the clichés of high achievers after their father's approval, Milligan's taboo-breaking satirical pen goes on the attack again in the side-plots, this time making digs at incredulous religious types, as Lacuna miraculously awakens from her coma. While still beautifully coloured by Laura Allred, Nick Craine's looser brushwork evokes Mike Allred's early Madman style. (MAT) 8

Courtney Crumrin in the Twilight Kingdom 2

by Naifeh; Oni Press

<+> Courtney enrols in 'Saturday school' for the children of witches and warlocks. Left to their own devices they'd be putting curses on one another. Even among children touched by magic like herself Courtney feels an outcast. There's some nicely worked-in conjuring from Courtney, even if she is unappreciated by her peers. Whereas issue #1 was more self-contained, this episode sets the scene for a continuing adventure. (DK) 7

Deep Sleeper 1

by Hester & Huddleston; Oni Press

Phil Hester and Mike Huddleston reunite for a new series looking at dreams. A struggling writer suffering from recurring nightmares he can't remember goes to a religious meeting that may be a whole lot more than it seems. With a slight *Matrix*-esque feel Hester sets up a metaphysical adventure for this genuinely captivating series opener. Mike Huddleston's stylishly ink-brushed pages have the feel of Paul Pope's work. (MAT) 8

8 ½ Ghosts

by Tommaso; Alternative Comics

A struggling film maker discovers a house haunted by a friendly family of ghosts and takes the opportunity to create a horror B-movie, but things go wrong when the actors get spooked and poltergeists move in. Rich Tommaso's stylish artwork is possibly too indebted to the Seth style of retro brushwork, but his kooky script mixing *Casper the Friendly Ghost*-style naivety with Dan Clowes-esque strangeness creates a handsome end product. (MAT) 7

Frank Miller's Robocop 5

by Miller + Grant & Ryp; Avatar/Pulsar

<=> Another violent issue as Robocop's (strangely muscular) partner concludes her run-in with the OCP-hired thugs, meanwhile Murphy comes face-to-face with his psychotic successor. Frank Miller's script is as cynical as ever but also savagely comical, with that clever car defence system gag that made it into the film turning up. As in previous issues, Juan Jose Ryp's artwork is immaculately detailed (if somewhat overly so), which perhaps explains the delayed publication rate. (MAT) 7

Heroes Anonymous 3

by Gimple & Pepoy; Bongo Entertainment

Bill Morrison and Scott Gimple's world of superheroes should appeal to fans of Kurt Busiek's Astro City; but they're playing it for laughs as well as pathos, ably assisted by Andrew Pepoy's semi-cartooning style of art. This issue tells of The Maiden's dilemmas as she struggles to reconcile coupledom with having a life of her own. But the tale of the Gay Avenger in #2 was the one not to miss. (DK) 7

Legends from Darkwood 2

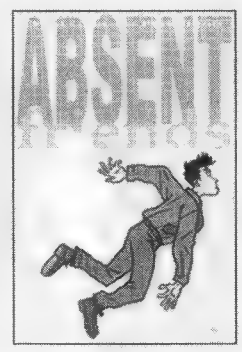
by Reid & Kántz; Antarctic Press

<-> Rose puts out a contract on Raynd the Unicorn Hunter. Only not one bloodthirsty brigand dares to take it. Writer Christopher Reid appears to have put aside his toying with fairytale conventions, until he literally drops a bomb. John Kantz's art fluctuates noticeably, not hitting the standard of the first issue. Even so, this is a fine new series, worth sticking around for. (CEB) 6

Absent Friends

by Grist + Elliott; Slave Labor Graphics

Slave Labor Graphics performs a great service by collecting together Paul Grist and Phil Elliott's early comics work. Published through the late-'80s, these short strips capture the lives of struggling artists and outsiders with all the charm and honest naivety that have afforded Grist and Elliott a cult following. The title tale highlights their storytelling skills, as a young man bumps into an old housemate, recounts the rugged charm of this unhinged character to his girlfriend and faces a clever twist to the tale. (MAT) 7



Love Fights 7

by Watson; Oni Press

<=> After his disastrous night with Nora, Jack attempts to meet up with her again during an interview with this ex-inker which only makes matters worse. Meanwhile Nora's investigation into the Flamer's illegitimate child uncovers even more dark secrets. It's still odd to see Andi Watson tackle the superhero genre, but this remains fun, with the odd-ball comedy of the setting adding to rather than distracting from the melodrama. (MAT) 7

My Flesh is Cool 1

by Grant & Fiumara; Avatar

An experimental drug enables Evan Knox to work as a highly paid assassin and troublemaker who can take over other people's bodies. He can get to anyone, anywhere, without detection. He does whatever he wants, and uses other people in a ruthlessly instrumental way. The catch is this: what if everyone could get their hands on the drug? Both script and art are adult and gritty. This comic is cool. (DK) 8

The Mysterious Traveler Returns 1

by Gentile & von Eeden; Moonstone Noir

Behind a dull photo cover in an overpriced $4.95 black and white 40-page comic, ex-Batman artist Trevor von Eeden continues his long-overdue return, as Moonstone's highest profile creator. Bearing no relation to the Charlton comic of the '50s, this apparently revives an old radio concept but would have benefited greatly from the inclusion of a text feature, which could also add substance and some form of identity for this little-known publisher. A nicely told if somewhat slight story with confident albeit sketchy art, enhanced greatly by Wally Lowe's judicious use of halftones. (TM) 7

Ninja High School 112

by Bair & Bevard; Antarctic Press

<=> A love-struck monster-hunter, an irked talking statue, a cursed cave, and a possessed protagonist; all-in-all a typical day in the madcap world of NHS. One of the most captivating American manga comics available, it would certainly be interesting to see how a mainstream superhero fared under creator Katie Bair's energetic style. (CEB) 8

Peanutbutter and Jeremy's Best Book Ever

by Kolchaka; Alternative Comics

Peanutbutter is a cat who wears a hat and tie and likes to help in her owner's work. Jeremy is a crow and Peanutbutter's sort-of friend. They don't fight crime, but they do get into ordinary, day-to-day adventures that are a joy to read. This is pure comics. (RC) 8

Rob Zombie's Spookshow International 4

by Zombie & various; MVCreations

In expecting a run-of-the-mill horror title that

took itself too seriously, the true shock was to find a comic full of convention-defying humour in much the same vein as Mark Leigh and Mike Lepine's book, How to be a Superhero. Add to that some great art by Pat Boutin, Kieron Dwyer, and Miguel Montenegro, this now goes straight onto my "must-read" pile. (CEB) 8

Things Are Meaning Less

by Burian; Microcosm/Top Shelf; $10

This follows the sweet and sour musings of creator Al Burian as he attempts to make sense of life with his philosophising over coffee, friends, himself, and pretty much anything, and everything, else. Try this if you like your comics a little off-centre and different, but intelligent and insightful nonetheless. (CEB) 6

Canadian Indies

Transformers: Energon 20

by Furman & Guidi + To + Poblete; DreamWave Productions

<=> As Prime tries to convince the council that there is a threat, the Terrorcons attack Earth. Grown up or not, the reintroduction of Transformers: Armada's kid sidekicks is probably not a good move, and they get far too much "screen time" here. Aside from that, this is competent, but uninspiring work, with good art and good writing, but little in the way of excitement. (KG) 7

Transformers: Generation One 1

by Mick & Figureoa + To; DreamWave Productions

The Autobots get smacked around by Bruticus while something mysterious and powerful awakens on Cybertron. The scripting is clumsy, bordering on inane, but Brad Mick does put imaginative spins on classic Transformers concepts, which just about makes up for it. Don Figureoa and Elaine To finally exorcise the memory of Pat Lee's "bubbly" Transformers with some good art. (KG) 6

Transformers: Generation One 2

by Mick & Figureoa + To; DreamWave Productions

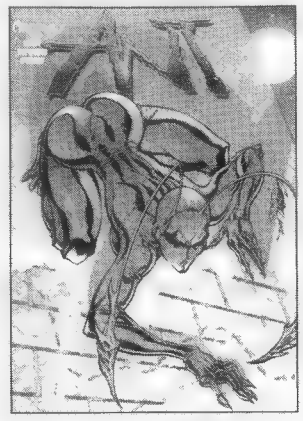
<=> The Autobots again flounder about in a generally incompetent manner, while the mysterious Sunstorm continues his plan. The plot is choppy, the scripting clunky, and Brad Mick's obvious enthusiasm for the villains is starting to unbalance the comic. That said, it's readable enough, and Mick at least takes the plot in new and interesting directions. (KG) 6

European Indies

Gutsman Comics – Volume 1

by Oog & Blik + Kriek; Euro 9.95 from Oog & Blik
Nieuwe Hemweg 7e, 1013 BG
Amsterdam (www.oogenblik.nl)

Think Love and Rockets of the superhero world mixed with Quentin Tarantino and you'd arrive at Gutsman by Danish creator Erik Kriek. Where Kriek comes into his own however, is that this comic is wordless, despite the fact he focuses on such complexities as love affairs, despair, temptation and loss. A break from the norm... but a welcome one. (CEB) 7



The Ant 1

by Gully & Gully + Repovski; Arcana Studio

Hanna's father is arrested, but in her journal her alter-ego Ant saves the day. Mario Gully, who co-plots, scripts and draws this piece, is a name to watch. His pencils show clear talent, doing well to confirm mood and emotion and producing some powerful visuals. Better where more lightly inked by the notable Peter Repovski, Gully's obviously a fan of the female form – for example, I've never met a woman with breasts as heavingly unreal as the principle. Though perhaps appealing more to teenage readers, the content welcomes older buyers too. (IM) 6

UK Indies

Mego: Action Figure Toys

by Bonavita;
£16.95 from Bushwood Books
6 Marksbury Avenue
Kew Gardens, Surrey TW9 4JF

With clear and concise historical text on the now-obsolete action figure manufacturer Mego (known in the UK as Palitoy), author John Bonavita lets the excellent photos do the real talking. Doctor Who, Star Trek and Planet of the Apes are included, but the main focus falls on Mego's various Marvel and DC figure lines, especially the World's Greatest Super-Heroes. This terrific guide also features prototypes, foreign exclusives and never produced figures. Guaranteed to bring back fond memories. (CEB) 8

Transformer Collectibles: Unofficial Guide

by Alvarez;
£34.95 from Bushwood Books
6 Marksbury Avenue
Kew Gardens, Surrey TW9 4JF

Writer J.E. Alvarez makes sure of capitalising on the Transformers big comics comeback by dedicating a significant amount of this book to it, even reminding us that the robots in disguise once teamed up with GI Joe and Spider-Man. There's a plethora of fantastic colour pics, accompanied by interesting background info. And if that isn't enough, merchandise ranging from sunglasses to shampoo bottles is also covered. The unofficial guide it may be, but "ultimate" would have been a more fitting adjective. (CEB) 8

The Unauthorized Batman Collector's Guide

by Porter;
£24.95 from Bushwood Books
6 Marksbury Avenue
Kew Gardens, Surrey TW9 4JF

This may well feature trading cards and toys, but don't be fooled: the real star of this book is the medium of Batman's creation: the comics. The excellent cover reprints, flowing text, plus "Batlists" (including a giant appearance index) – all wrapped up in a glossy and gorgeous shell – make this a prized addition to every fan's batshelf. (CEB) 8

Whitechapel Freak

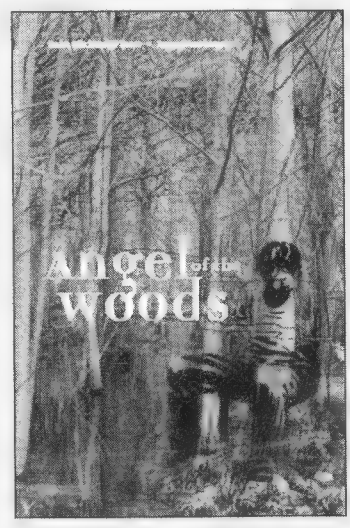
by Hitchcock; Black Boar Press

Creator David Hitchcock speculates on whom Jack The Ripper may have been, and creates a fantasy answer that may not fit into current thinking but which is consistently entertaining; sold as a tabloid-size newspaper, this enthralling story unfolds in imaginatively panelled pages inside. The artwork, grimy black and white sketches, suits the theme of a fogged-up, dangerous and poverty-stricken London. A welcome addition to Ripper mythology, this is a compelling read. (IM) 8

Angel in the Woods

by Wilson & Heufemann; BoyChild Productions

Terry and friends holiday in the woods, where a mysterious creature lurks. This book has a richly cinematic feel, combining suspenseful 'horror' films, a Stephen King novel and Swamp Thing. Angel aspires to be comics as literature, with Sean Michael Wilson's studied plotting and strong grasp of theology and philosophy allowing him to balance spiritual themes with an entertaining and ever-more engrossing read. Argentine Jorge Heufemann handles the black and white artwork, and is particularly strong on the spiritual transformation scenes, but it's the lyrical plot themes that makes this intriguing book memorable. (IM) 7



UK Newsstand

The Astonishing Spider-Man 110

by various; Panini UK/ Marvel Collectors' Edition

Two differing perspectives on father/son relationships: the first, by Paul Jenkins, is layered and insightful; the second, by Howard Mackie, is clumsy and implausible. The interior art, by Buckingham and Romita Jr, is top notch, although the latter submits an uncharacteristically substandard cover featuring arch-villain (ahem) The Squid. (KM) 8

Batman: Legends 5

by various; Panini UK/ DC Collectors' Edition

Hush continues with Batman and Superman slugging it out in Metropolis. In the increasingly enjoyable second strip by Hama and McDaniel, the Dark Knight takes on Orca. A bizarre Brave and the Bold reprint, featuring Sgt. Rock, rounds off the issue, where Neal Adams' stylish art apologises for a hokey premise. (KM) 8

Commando 3677

by unknown; DC Thomson

<=> *Dangerous Game* sees a plucky British engineer, highly trained in the use of explosives, fighting alongside the Partisans of Yugoslavia. They'll have to use all their wits to survive an imminent German attack – and there may well be traitor in their midst. A competent, if rather straightforward, Commando thriller. (SM) 6

Essential X-Men 110

by Lobdell & various; Panini UK/ Marvel Collectors' Edition

Lobdell's scripts have been more cohesive and intelligible than much of Claremont's recent run. However, it's disappointingly clear that Magneto's 'death' this issue is merely a temporary setback. The current art teams will be missed and, though greater things are promised, readers must endure Claremont's return next issue with X-Treme X-Men... (KM) 6

Hellbrant Grimm: Some Swift and Brutal Hand

by Scanlon & The Sharp Brothers; Black Library; £5.99

Following the completion of a run-of-the-mill job, things soon take a turn for the personal for notorious mercenary Grimm, as an old friend – raised from the dead – attacks him. As Grimm carves a path through the world of Warhammer to discover the reason behind this, it becomes apparent that somebody is out to get him. The intricate plot shows writer Mitchel Scanlon to be a class act, along with artists, the Sharp brothers, who expertly capture it all: the intense violence right down to the facial expressions. (CEB) 7

Judge Dredd The Megazine 216

by various; Rebellion

<=> Half this issue is devoted to the

junior Judge Giant, in two new stories and a reprint. The best of these is in the 'Whatever Happened to..?' strand; and the reprint is not at all a bad read. On the down side, *Blood of Satanus II* seems to be written to annoy on almost every level, and David Bishop persists in judging 1970s Dredd scripts by the standards of today. (DK) 7

Mighty World of Marvel (volume 3) 14

by various; Panini UK/ Marvel Collectors' Edition

Mighty World of Marvel exemplifies the law of diminishing returns: Daredevil #176 is classic Frank Miller; Captain America #111 showcases Jim Steranko's psychedelic layouts, with Stan Lee frantically scripting to match. Conversely, Thomas and Trimpe's Hulk vs Absorbing Man clash is pedestrian and predictable. Ol' Greenskin is currently the weakest link and deserves much better. (KM) 6

Spectacular Spider-Man 96

by Quinn & Williams + various; Panini Comics

Under a striking cover, Spidey finds himself in jail. It looks like nothing will be able to stop Doc Ock, Eraser and Electro's rampage now, until a certain blind lawyer shows up. These original tales may be marketed for the younger audience, but thanks to Jason Quinn's lively script and Simon Williams' dynamic artwork, the result it an enjoyable read for us older readers too. And keep your eyes peeled for a Death's Head cameo! (CEB) 7

Toxic 18

by various; Egmont Magazines

Two new strips feature this issue. First up it's *Team Toxic* by Lew Stringer, in which Doc Shock goes brain-dead; and then in *'Nanas & Custard* – by Stu Taylor and Paul J Holden – the oddball super-duo tackle a giant robot ape. Comics are never far way in the rest of the magazine too, with news on some of the latest superhero DVDs and toys. A mayhem-filled kids' magazine not to be missed! (CEB) 7

2000 AD Progs 1375-1378

by various; Rebellion

<=> Judge Dredd is featured in a so-so adventure, *Master of Fear*, followed by *Brothers of the Blood*. *The Red Seas* succeeds as a ripping fantasy yarn, with pirates and monsters galore. *Terror Tales*, whilst hit-and-miss, makes an acceptable filler, as does *Past Imperfect*. The year's first New Thrill is *Valkyries*: a sexploitation extravaganza by Steve Moore and Codename Knockout's John Lucas, that has quickly divided reader opinion. 2000 AD courts controversy yet again. (DK) 7

Ultimate X-Men 13

by Millar & various; Panini UK

A mixed issue, concluding *Hellfire and Brimstone* and setting up *Return of the King*. The re-invented origin of Phoenix is imaginatively realised, but the Xavier and Magneto flashback tale is somewhat superficial. The second strip also highlights how inferior (and annoying) the frequent art fill-ins for Kubert can be. (KM) 7

Warhammer Monthly 78

by various; Black Library

<=> *Deathwatch* concludes, but I for one am not sorry to see it go, having found it confusing and muddled. Sinister fantasy *Darkblade* and despair-laden *Titan* are the complete opposite however, being two of this comicbook's biggest stars. And, as always with this anthology, as soon as you reach the end, you're left craving more. (CEB) 7

Warhammer Monthly 79

by various; Black Library

<=> New addition *Quarry* – by James Peaty and John Stokes – is a strong opener for the latest gritty issue. It also features Dan Abnett and Anthony Williams' enthralling *Titan Omnissiah*, a bloodthirsty *Darkblade* story, and a Steve Yeowell-illustrated *Tales from the Ten-Tailed Cat*. With the addition of a creator interview feature, this comic is as deft as it is dark... very! (CEB) 7

Small Press

Halloween-man: It Came from Texas

by Edwards + Parr & various; $4.50 (plus p&p from the US) www.halloweenman.com

US-based indie with a strong web presence. This 100-page black and white reproduction collects together an assortment of Halloween-man stories. Bringing together a love of horror comics and movies, this comic may be of interest to other horror fans, with its many references and tributes. There are some unique and interesting ideas, but occasionally it leans too heavily on clichés. A marked improvement in art and writing as the stories progress, this is an enjoyable collection of stories. (LO) 7

Phobias

by various; Accent UK; £2.50 from www.devacomics.com

A nicely produced black and white anthology showcasing some of the most talented UK small press artists. It's always interesting to see what gets pulled out of the bag when a theme is used in an anthology, and Phobias is a great example of its kind. The standard of work is consistent and every take on the phobias theme is unique. Inspiring. (AS) 8

Really Old Newts Special

by Smith; £1 from Smallzone 10 Cleveland Avenue, High Ercall Telford, Shropshire TF6 6AH

More of what you would expect from Richard J. Smith, simple uncluttered line work and slapstick heavy parody from the creator of Cheronna. What makes this title interesting is it's a step back in time, showing Smith's earlier work, abandoned ideas and story arcs and preliminary sketches. Smith has come a long way and some of this stuff really hasn't stood the test of time. Nevertheless this is interesting and entertaining stuff. (AS) 6

WANTED
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Q&A

345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Baffle us with comics questions, or save us with answers!

Don Lawrence

David Robinson via e-mail: nivlem99@hotmail.com

WHAT is the most efficient and comprehensive way in which a come-lately collector can gather Don Lawrence's work, in terms of both past and future publications?

The Q&A Brains Trust's David Roach replies: The best way to track down the great Don Lawrence's work at the moment is to scour eBay for reprints of his Trigan Empire *strip. There was a thick Hamlyn collection in the mid '70s and a Fleetway annual from about the same time, both of which covered the same strips reprinted from* ***Ranger*** *and* ***Look and Learn****.*

More recently, Hawk Books released a nice volume in the same format as its Dan Dare books, but unfortunately all these books are incredibly expensive. It's much cheaper to track down old copies of ***Vulcan*** *from the '70s, all of which feature Trigan Empire reprints – as does the* ***Vulcan Annual*** *– at a much more reasonable price.*

For ***Storm*** *you could buy copies on holiday in countries like Holland, Belgium or France – or seek out the '80s volumes from Titan Books. The big news at the moment though is that Steve Holland is currently beavering away on translations of the whole run of* ***Storm*** *for release later this year through Don Lawrence's Dutch fan club. Dez promises maximum coverage within these pages!*

Marvel annuals

Steve Page via e-mail: stevejeff@onetel.net.uk

In my early teens back in the '70s I bought Marvel hardback annuals published by World Distributors. Can you tell me if I missed any?

I currently have:
Avengers – 1975, 76, 77 and 78
Mighty World of Marvel – 1978
The Incredible Hulk – 1979

More recently I've picked up a Fleetway **Marvel Annual** from 1972. Were there more of these at around the same time or earlier?

'60s alien invasion

Jon Carr
Withern, Lincolnshire

I USED to get the DC Thomson axis comics of the late-'60s and early-'70s – **Beano**, **Dandy** and **Beezer**. My fondest memory of these comics is an alien invasion, War of the Worlds-style story, which featured in one of the big three, circa 1969.

I was only about five years old when I read them, but it has stayed with me because it was my first introduction to science fiction. Can anyone tell me what this story was? I would love to read it again.

Matt Marriott

Isabelinho Domingos, R. Ant. Joaquim da Guerra, 5, 7150-120 Borba, Portugal

ARE there any British reprints of the *Matt Marriott* serial? If not, why not?

David A. Roach once more: Incredibly there have been no reprints of Matt Marriott *in this country, and as for why, I think you just have to chalk it down to an apallingly conservative UK comics industry which has never valued its own work, and an American-obsessed fandom who just didn't care.*

And it's not just Matt Marriott *(which was truly wonderful by the way) – you can add* Carol Day, Gun Law, Tiffany Jones, The Avengers, Romeo Brown, *even the likes of* Garth, Jane *and* Jeff Hawke *have only received partial reprints. Titan Books did a great job in the '80s with* Modesty Blaise *and* James Bond *reprints and also issued a couple of* Garth *and* Jeff Hawke *books (which it seems to be reissuing) but clearly they didn't catch on like the* ***2000 AD*** *books.*

Ironically you're more likely to find good quality reprints of British strips in mainland Europe – I've got beautiful titles from Italy, Germany and the old Yugoslavia. I have a lovely Matt Marriott *reprint in an Italian title called* ***Mago West*** *which came out in 1976 so you might have some luck tracking that down on eBay Italia.*

Incidentally David Lloyd was selling Matt Marriott *originals on behalf of Tony Weare for several years back in the '80s – quite lovely they were too – and for all I know may still be doing so. What do you say, Dave ?*

Herne the Hunter

Simon R. Green via e-mail: simon@shadowsfall.demon.co.uk

BACK in my disreputable childhood I remember reading some British annuals (probably 1950s), which featured a comics series of stories featuring Herne the Hunter, awoken in the 'modern' day.

Any ideas where these might have appeared, and who was responsible for story and art?

Answer Updates

Readers provide answers for previous issues' questions

Grant Morrison, CI #168

Brains Trustee Rob Kirby provides an add-on:

JUST a small correction to the Grant Morrison checklist that appeared in *Q&A*. There were two episodes missed out of the listing for the Zoids saga in **Spider-Man and Zoids**, which should have read: #18, 19, 30, 31, 36, 37 and then right through from 40 to 50.

Incidentally, that strip in **Action Force** (weekly) #17, drawn by Steve Yeowell, was narrated by Quick-Kick, acting as a short recap designed to launch a brief reprinting of several Shang-Chi episodes, most of which had only been seen once before, way back in the days of **The Avengers**.

Swamp Thing and Man-Thing, CI #169

Matthew Barber, Edinburgh

There may not have been an official crossover between Man-Thing and Swamp Thing but the two appeared in thinly disguised form as Woman-Thing and Sumpthing in **Cerebus** #24-25 (1981). The battle of the muck monsters soon becomes rather amorous. The characters have since appeared in occasional cameos in Dave Sim's masterwork.

The Brain Trust's David A Roach adds:

As far as I know Swamp Thing and Man-Thing have never met although Man-Thing and Man-Bat 'merged' in the Amalgam title **Bat-Thing** – which I had high hopes for but found sadly a little bit disappointing. The only time I've seen the two together at all was in an '80s illustration by Nestor Redondo which was drawn for a fan and was later printed in **Comic Book Artist** #5. Needless to say it was sublime (if two rampaging swamp creatures could ever be considered sublime).

Atlas Comics, CI #169

David A Roach adds to the published answers:

The late, lamented Atlas Comics Group lasted from December 1974 to October 1975, leaving a wonderfully bizarre legacy of quirky comics in their wake. Opinions differ about this, of course – Frank Plowright in the new **Comics Guide** royally slags them all off (except those few titles I reviewed which had rave notices). Yes, much of the line consisted of transparent rip-offs of Marvel characters (Destructor was Spider-Man, the Brute was the Hulk, etc) but Atlas seemed to push things just that little bit further with copious doses of horror, violence and weirdness.

They also had an impressive roster of the era's more individualistic talents such as Frank Thorne, Alex Toth, Pat Boyette, Ernie Colon, Alan Weiss, Walt Simonson, Russ Heath and the great but little known Leo Summers. With a line that barely lasted a year it's hard to say that any of their comics were the most popular – arguably none of them were. My recollections of the time are that **The Phoenix** was the most popular with readers followed by **Planet of the Vampires** and the black and white titles – particularly **Thrilling Adventure Stories**.

A couple of Atlas heroes did manage to live on after the company's collapse though; Rich Bucklers' Demon Hunter popped up in **Defenders** and Howard Chaykin's Scorpion was subtly rejigged into **Dominic Fortune**. Atlas itself was set up by ex-Marvel owner Martin Goodman as an act of revenge against Marvel for not hiring his son Chip as publisher. The comics died a death but their porn division flourished – make of that what you will.

For the full story you could do no better than check out the ever wonderful **Comic Book Artist** #16 which will tell you all you need to know.

The first ever comic, CI #169

David A Roach, taking a serious break from his drawing board, again:

NOTHING divides historians like the question of what was the first comic – there are quite few contenders. Humour magazines like **Punch** featured all sorts of strip-like features but it wasn't really a comic. Ditto the late Victorian title **Ally Sloper**, much trumpeted by the late Dennis Gifford, but that didn't really run strips as we know them. I think the first comic that we would recognise was *Comic Cuts*, published by Harmsworths in 1890 which featured the sort of humour strips you can still see today in **The Beano** (with some of the same jokes too!).

The first comics creator was Rodolphe Topfer, a Swiss artist whose humorous pamphlets were published (and bootlegged) all over Europe and the US in the mid-Victorian era. I don't feel they look exactly like comics – the art in particular seems closer to book illustrations – but he certainly has his champions.

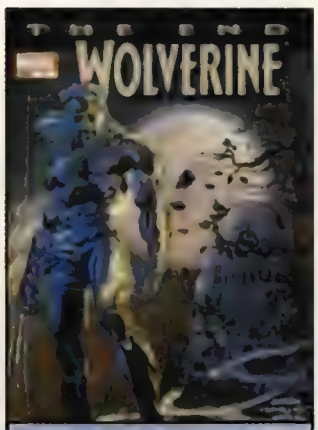
The first all-new American comic series was Dell's **The Funnies** from 1929 which was inspired by British comics, but used the same format as a Sunday newspaper section. The first US comic in the format we would recognise was **Funnies on Parade** from 1933 which was all reprint as all US comics were until DC's **New Fun** from 1935, later retitled **More Fun**. Needless to say they're all rarer than hen's teeth!

Comics Economics

Top 100 US comicbook sales for November 2003

Marvel 1602 up to #2

Rank	Prior	Title, Issue, Price & Estimated Orders	Publisher
1	(=)	**JLA/Avengers #3** $5.95 (148,196)	Marvel
2	(3)	**Marvel 1602 #4** $3.50 (122,683)	Marvel
3	(N)	**Wolverine: The End #1** $2.99 (116,209)	Marvel
4	(5)	**Ultimate Six #4** $2.25 (105,978)	Marvel
5	(6)	**Ultimate X-Men #39** $2.25 (105,737)	Marvel
6	(10)	**New X-Men #149** $2.25 (102,591)	Marvel
7	(=)	**Batman #621** $2.25 (96,784)	DC Comics
8	(12)	**Ultimate Spider-Man #49** $2.25 (96,707)	Marvel
9	(2)	**Amazing Spider-Man #501** $2.25 (94,558)	Marvel
10	(13)	**Uncanny X-Men #433** $2.25 (90,764)	Marvel



Wolverine: The End in at #2

11	(14)	**Wolverine #7** $2.25 (78,734)	Marvel
12	(11)	**Wolverine #8** $2.25 (77,040)	Marvel
13	(15)	**Supreme Power #4** $2.99 (71,620)	Marvel
14	(19)	**Teen Titans #5** $2.50 (68,078)	DC Comics
15	(16)	**Spectacular Spider-Man #6** $2.25 (67,633)	Marvel
16	(15)	**Spectacular Spider-Man #7** $2.25 (66,065)	Marvel
17	(24)	**X-Treme X-Men #34** $2.99 (61,574)	Marvel
18	(28)	**JLA #90** $2.25 (60,093)	DC Comics
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 60 ,000			
19	(31)	**Avengers #73** $2.25 (58,177)	Marvel
20	(30)	**Daredevil #54** $2.99 (57,557)	Marvel
21	(19)	**Avengers #74** $2.25 (57,557)	Marvel
22	(21)	**Hulk: Gray #3** $3.50 (56,135)	Marvel
23	(27)	**Transformers/GI Joe #3** $2.95 (54,935)	DreamWave
24	(34)	**Incredible Hulk #63** $2.25 (53,357)	Marvel
25	(36)	**Fantastic Four #506** $2.25 (51,721)	Marvel
26	(25)	**Fantastic Four #507** $2.25 (51,179)	Marvel
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 50,000			
27	(37)	**Outsiders #6** $2.50 (48,160)	DC Comics
28	(22)	**Thanos #2** $2.99 (45,769)	Marvel
29	(40)	**JSA #54** $2.50 (45,169)	DC Comics
30	(35)	**NYX #2** $2.99 (44,404)	Marvel
31	(25)	**Transformers: War Within (v2) #2** $2.95 (43,253)	DreamWave
32	(42)	**Captain America #20** $2.99 (41,143)	Marvel
33	(45)	**Formerly known as Justice League #5** $2.50 (40,369)	DC Comics
34	(50)	**Exiles #37** $2.99 (40,272)	Marvel
35	(=)	**JLA Z #2** $2.50 (40,107)	DC Comics
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 40,000			
36	(N)	**Spider-Man/Dr Octopus: Out of Reach #1** $2.99 (39,807)	Marvel
37	(49)	**Superman: Birthright #5** $2.95 (39,749)	DC Comics
38	(46)	**Emma Frost #5** $2.50 (39,527)	Marvel
39	(41)	**Punisher #36** $2.99 (39,217)	Marvel
40	(38)	**Silver-Surfer #3** $2.25 (39,081)	Marvel
41	(47)	**Punisher #35** $2.99 (39,081)	Marvel
42	(45)	**Batman/Superman/Wonder Woman Trinity #3** $6.95 (38,956)	DC
43	(60)	**GI Joe #23** $2.95 (38,849)	Image
44	(51)	**New Mutants #7** $2.50 (38,830)	Marvel
45	(55)	**Green Arrow #32** $2.50 (38,385)	DC Comics
46	(43)	**GI Joe #24** $2.95 (38,123)	Image
47	(57)	**Detective Comics #78** $2.75 (37,543)	DC Comics
48	(54)	**Mystique #8** $2.99 (37,097)	Marvel
49	(56)	**Spawn #130** $2.50 (37,030)	Image
50	(36)	**Spider-Man/Dr Octopus: Negative Exposure #2** $2.99 (36,420)	Marvel
51	(53)	**Venom #8** $2.99 (36,400)	Marvel
52	(35)	**JLA Z #3** $2.50 (36,033)	DC Comics
53	(62)	**Flash #204** $2.25 (35,423)	DC Comics
54	(61)	**Thor Vikings #5** $3.50 (34,891)	Marvel

55	(67)	**Superman #199** $2.25 (33,429)	DC Comics
56	(70)	**Green Lantern #171** $2.25 (32,374)	DC Comics
57	(69)	**JSA: All Stars #7** $3.50 (32,103)	DC Comics
58	(66)	**Iron Man #74** $2.99 (32,016)	Marvel
59	(72)	**Thor #71** $2.99 (31,706)	Marvel
60	(55)	**Wolverine Snikt #5** $2.99 (30,961)	Marvel
61	(77)	**Birds of Prey #61** $2.50 (30,768)	DC Comics
62	(78)	**Street Fighter #3** $2.95 (30,690)	Image
63	(74)	**X-Statix #15** $2.99 (30,042)	Marvel
■ International direct market retail orders estimated below 30,000			
64	(75)	**Action Comics #80** $2.25 (29,819)	DC Comics
65	(80)	**Nightwing #87** $2.25 (29,674)	DC Comic
66	(76)	**Batman: Death & Maidens #4** $2.95 (29,413)	DC Comics
67	(81)	**Batman: Gotham Knights #47** $2.75 (29,413)	DC Comics
68	(N)	**Teen Titans: Go #1** $2.25 (29,055)	DC Comics
69	(82)	**Wonder Woman #198** $2.25 (28,977)	DC Comics
70	(65)	**Michael Turner Presents Aspen #2** $2.99 (28,832)	ASP
71	(79)	**Transformers: Armada #17** $2.95 (28,658)	DreamWave
72	(63)	**X-Statix #16** $2.99 (28,251)	Marvel
73	(84)	**Alias #28** $2.99 (28,125)	Marvel
74	(N)	**Superman/Thundercats** $5.95 (28,019)	DC Comics
75	(86)	**Hawkman #21** $2.50 (27,642)	D C Comics
76	(63)	**Hawkeye #2** $2.99 (27,574)	Marvel
77	(89)	**Weapon X #15** $2.99 (27,516)	Marvel
78	(92)	**Y: The Last Man #16** $2.95 (27,448)	DC Comics
79	(88)	**Adventures of Superman #622** $2.25 (27,254)	DC Comics
80	(85)	**Batgirl #46** $2.50 (27,167)	DC Comic
81	(87)	**Legion #26** $2.50 (26,63)5	D C Comics
82	(113)	**Catwoman #25** $2.50 (26,345)	DC Comics
83	(109)	**GI Joe: Frontline #16** $2.95 (26,257)	Image
84	(99)	**Powers #35** $2.95 (26,141)	Image
85	(98)	**Fables #19** $2.50 (25,948)	DC Comics
86	(87)	**Legion #27** $2.50 (25,667)	DC Comics
87	(91)	**The Authority (v2) #7** $2.95 (25,657)	DC Comics
88	(103)	**Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #173** $2.50 (25,406)	DC Comics
89	(83)	**GI Joe: Frontline #17** $2.95 (25,290)	Image
90	(102)	**Superman & Batman Generations III #11** $2.95 (25,193)	DC Comics
91	(90)	**Thundercats: Hammerhands Revenge #2** $2.95 (25,164)	DC Comics
92	(83)	**Batman: City of Light #2** $2.95 (24,399)	DC Comics
93	(100)	**Captain Marvel #16** $2.99 (24,399)	Marvel
94	(96)	**Kingpin #6** $2.50 (24,302)	Marvel
95	(105)	**Aquaman #12** $2.50 (23,993)	DC Comics
96	(97)	**Trouble #5** $2.99 (23,673)	Marvel
97	(N)	**Danger Girl: Viva Las Danger** $4.95 (23,431)	DC Comics
98	(110)	**Elektra #29** $2.99 (23,373)	Marvel
99	(86)	**Darkness (v2) #6** $2.99 (23,112)	Image
100	(111)	**Sojourn #29** $2.95 (23,102)	CrossGen

With thanks to Milton Griepp and ICv2.com

Panel Beaters

Comics International's monthly sampler of the best of the small press and indie comics scene

WHILE THE UK supply of post-adolescent comics has dwindled to a mere handful, by contrast the indie and small press market has mushroomed. In addition to **CI**'s Classified announcements and small press reviews section, *Panel Beaters* gives readers a chance to sample some of the best of what's currently out there – in print and online.

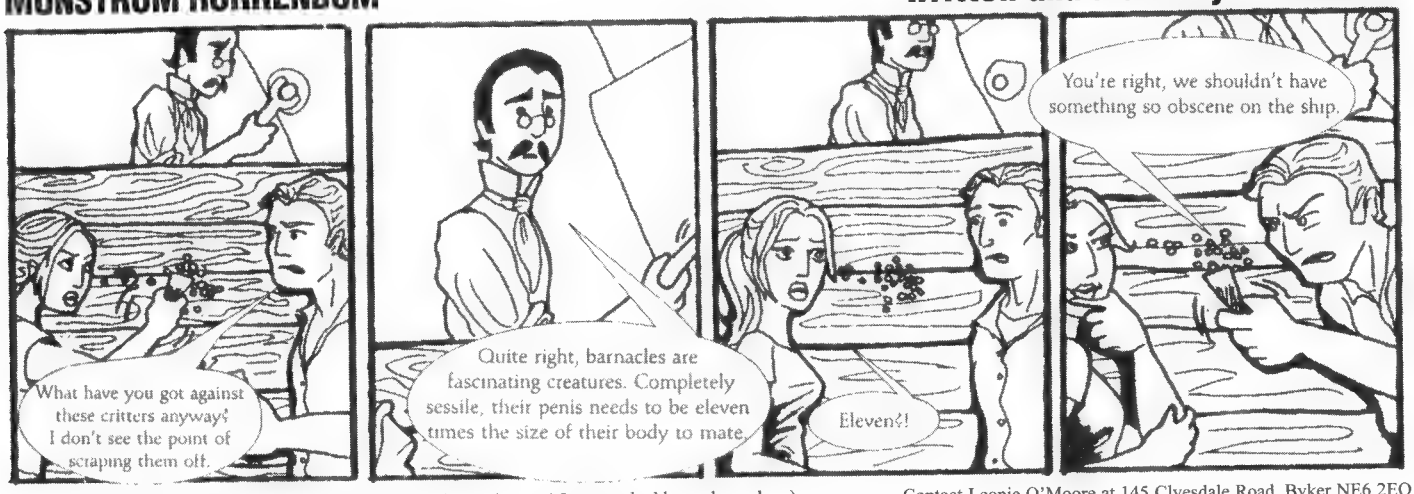
Would-be contributors to this section for future issues should note the proportions (printed size: 188mm wide, 120mm deep for double bank; 60mm deep for single bank) before submitting black and white copies of their work. Submissions should be readable as standalone jokes or stories, as tasters for the comic.

You can e-mail *comicsinternational@yahoo.com* for the *Panel Beaters* style sheet, or write to us at **Panel Beaters, Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ.**

Compiled by Leonie O'Moore, Andy Smith & Steve Turner

MONSTRUM HORRENDUM

written and drawn by L. O'Moore


What have you got against these critters anyway? I don't see the point of scraping them off.
Quite right, barnacles are fascinating creatures. Completely sessile, their penis needs to be eleven times the size of their body to mate.
Eleven?!
You're right, we shouldn't have something so obscene on the ship.

Issue #1 of this nautical adventure is on sale now, priced £1 (plus an A5 stamped addressed envelope).

Contact Leonie O'Moore at 145 Clyesdale Road, Byker NE6 2EQ

SOLAR WIND

written and drawn by Paul Scott

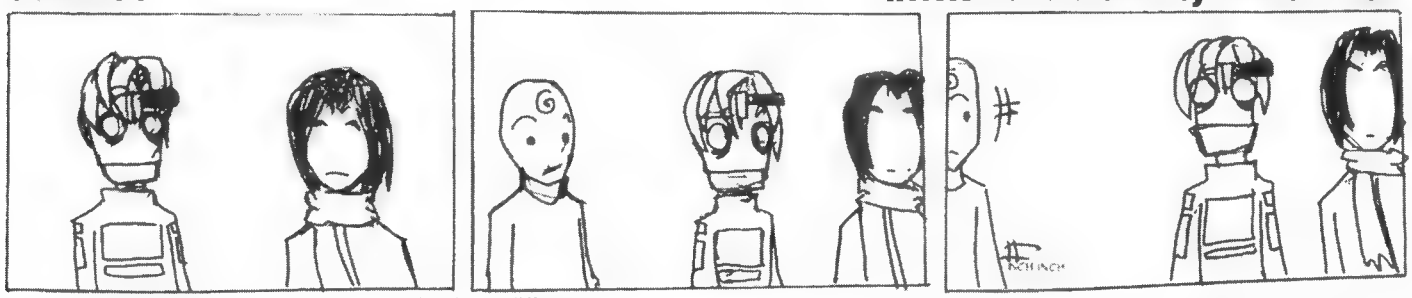
BRITAIN, 1977...
SALES (MILLIONS)
PROJECTED JUVENILE COMIC SALES
YEARS (DECADES)
1970 1980 1990 2000
THE FUTURE'S BRIGHT, BUT NOT AS BRIGHT AS I, COSMIC RAY, FOR I AM COSMIC!
YES RAY, YOU EDIT A VERY SUCCESSFUL COMIC, BUT WE MUST BEWARE COMPLACENCY!
THE COM-PLA-CEN-TORS? ARE THEY RELATED TO THE BLACK HOLE BLACKGUARDS, MY SWORN ENEMIES!?
ONLY LAST WEEK, MACWELL'S* GAVE AWAY A FREE WHOOPEE CUSHION...
IT GAVE US A NASTY FRIGHT RAY I CAN TELL YOU...
*DEADLY RIVAL
WE HAVE TO COMPETE AGAINST THEIR NEW TITLE, SPACE STUFF, BUT HOW!?
WELL, I WAS THINKING A MERGER WITH THE GEEZER AND UPDATE THE OLDER CHA-
OUT
IN
THINK TANK, THERE'S ONLY ONE THING WE CAN DO ...
...EMERGENCY EDITORIAL MEETING!
"THE USUAL COSMIC RAY?"
"WITH WHISKEY CHASERS, THIS IS A CRISIS!"
"OOPS"
CLUNK!
SLOSH!
"OY, DID YOU SPILL MY PINT?!"
"ER, HARD MAN HARRY, NO, IT WAS... THAT OLD MAN, OVER THERE!"
THE HOPE & ANCHOR
BACK AT THE SOLARIUM...
I'VE NEVER SEEN AN ANDROIT WORK SO FAST, WHO IS HE?
HIS NAME IS... BRAIN DRAIN
OH... HIM
BRILLIANT! IN MY ABSENCE I'VE INSPIRED A TOTAL REVAMP OF THE COMIC!
OOF! WELL DONE RAY, SOLAR WIND IS SAVED!
Solar Wind
WELL, THERE WAS A SLIGHT PROBLEM...
"SIR DESMOND SAID YOU COULD BREAK THE NEWS TO THE EDITOR OF THE GEEZER..."
HARD MAN HARRY!
OY! DID YOU MERGE MY COMIC?!!
HE'S TURNED JACK INTO A NANCIFIED SPACE BOFFIN!
NEXT WEEK: RAY IS HOSPITALISED OVER EDITORIAL DIFFERENCES

Solar Wind is currently available for £3 (cheques to Paul Scott).

Write to him at: 13 Kiln Crescent, Bishop Middleham, Ferryhill, Co Durham DL 17 9AP

OMITACO

written and drawn by Mikio Anton



MikioAnton's **OMiTACO** is a web comic like everything else but different. Read it at **www.cananime.net**

STUPORPOWERS

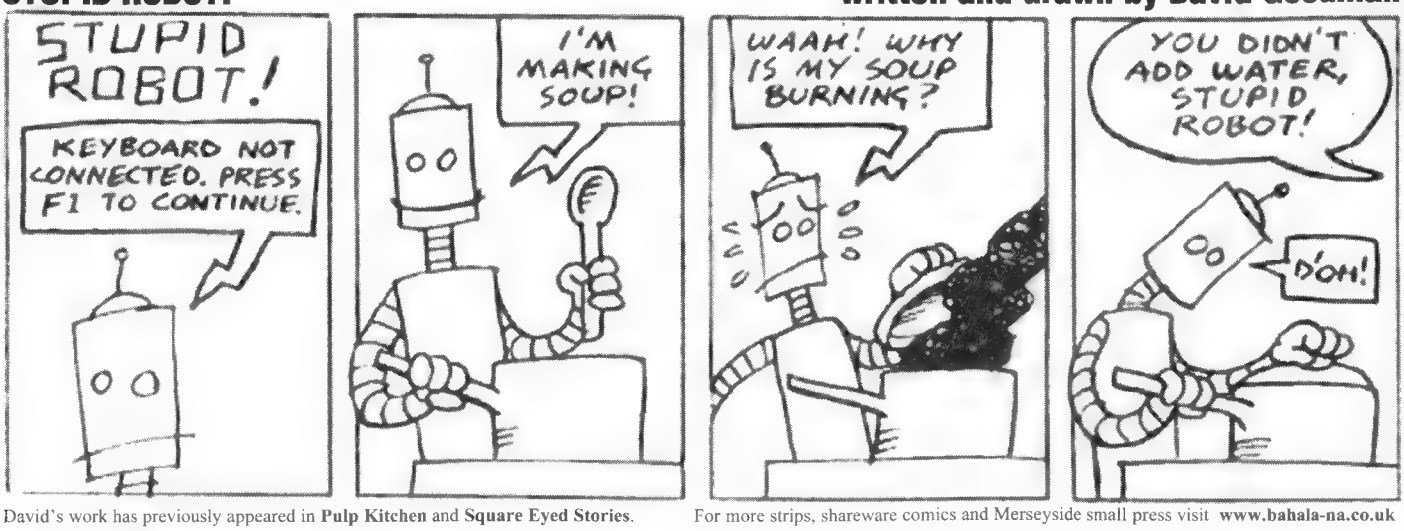
written and drawn by Ryan Dunlavey

MAN! IT FEELS LIKE WE'VE BEEN ON PATROL FOREVER! WARRIOR NEEDS FOOD - BADLY!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO TELL YOU BIG GUY...
...BUT I DON'T THINK WE COULD GET A PIZZA DELIVERED TO THIS NEIGHBORHOOD!
WORD.
>whisper< this place is so desolate that I bet that not even the all-nighter could find so much as a crap-ass corner deli out here...
?!
YA MEAN LIKE THAT ONE THERE?!
I LOVE IT WHEN HE DOES THAT.

STUPORPOWERS! was co-created with Steve Ellis and is also accompanied by a RPG of the same name. For this and other titles check out **www.eviltwincomics.com**

STUPID ROBOT!

written and drawn by David Goodman


STUPID ROBOT!
KEYBOARD NOT CONNECTED. PRESS F1 TO CONTINUE.
I'M MAKING SOUP!
WAAH! WHY IS MY SOUP BURNING?
YOU DIDN'T ADD WATER, STUPID ROBOT!
D'OH!

David's work has previously appeared in **Pulp Kitchen** and **Square Eyed Stories**. For more strips, shareware comics and Merseyside small press visit **www.bahala-na.co.uk**

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MAY 8th, JULY 3rd
LEEDS METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY, BRUNSWICK HALL, MERRION WAY

LIVERPOOL
SUNDAY: JUNE 20th
GLADSTONE HOTEL, LORD NELSON STREET, LIVERPOOL

MANCHESTER
SATURDAYS: MAY 1st, JUNE 19th,
AUGUST 7th
SACHAS HOTEL, TIB STREET, PICCADILLY, MANCHESTER

NEWCASTLE
SATURDAYS: APRIL 3rd, MAY 22nd
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHUMBRIA, STUDENTS' UNION BALLROOM,
SANDYFORD ROAD, NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE

NOTTINGHAM
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VICTORIA LEISURE CENTRE, GEDLING STREET, NOTTINGHAM

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OPENS MIDDAY

Letters

CI, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk)

Alternative top ten

Trevor Hill via e-mail: hill.trevor@virgin.net

TWO of my favourite features in **CI** are *Reviews* and *Comics Economics*. The former is useful to see if there are any titles out there I may be missing out on, the latter is a fun way of seeing how popular my own reads are.

Comics Economics is a chart based on sales or orders. However, I notice that many of my own buys appear low down or not on the list at all. Why not have an Alternative Top Ten? These could be those titles that get good reviews regularly, but have low sales for some strange reason. Or they could be previously bad titles that have improved greatly in recent months, but have failed to attract more readers.

Looking through the last few issues of **CI**, I have compiled a list of 10 titles that would qualify: **Gotham Central**, **Powers**, **Sleeper**, **The Walking Dead**, **Lone**, **Sojourn**, **Robocop**, **Lucifer**, **Dogwitch** and **X-Statix**.

And you could have an 11th entry: 'Turkey of the Month'. My vote goes to **Rob Zombie's Spookshow International**. A truly awful comic.

Recommendation

Steve Page via e-mail: stevejeff@onetel.net.uk

I RECEIVED **Comic Book Nation: The Transformation of Youth Culture in America** by Bradford C. Wright for Christmas and thoroughly enjoyed it.

Coming from a place of ignorance about the social and political backdrop of much that influenced the comicbooks I was (and am) reading from the '60s to the '90s, this answered a whole load of questions for me.

Since then the reviews of this book that I've read on the web seem to unfairly criticise it for what it doesn't do. For what it's worth, if **CI** readers fancy an easy read on this subject I'd recommend **Comic Book Nation**.

Can anyone who's read **How to Read Superhero Comics and Why** by Geoff Klock give me a recommendation?

That's all for now – 'cept to say **CI** is a killer of a mag. Everything under 'Regulars' especially.

Fake Baxendales

Leo Baxendale via e-mail

FURTHER TO the letter from Lew Stringer (**CI** #169) about original *Nervs* strips of mine being offered on eBay, I didn't even create the strip. I never made any drawings of them at all.

Catching up with false attributions and shoving them into a sack for disposal is futile – they always wriggle away out of your grasp. (I didn't create *The Dolls of St Dominics* either – just another will o' the wisp of misattribution.)

It isn't just that I've been credited with the creation of characters that were nothing to do with me – as if I hadn't created enough as it was – but there's the other matter of drawings done of my creations by others after I'd moved on.

If you want to read a surreal exchange of letters between myself, my solicitor, and Phaidon, over the misattribution to me of a Bash Street set drawn long after I'd stopped drawing for **The Beano**, scroll down The Baxendale Bulletin Board on my website www.reaper.co.uk – go on, scroll further down than that – keep scrolling (my website is built on the compost heap principle) until you reach 'Intellectual Tomfoolery (2): The Phaidon Phiasco', around Christmas 1996, and the bizarre correspondence with Phaidon's group lawyer Natalie Kontarsky.

Info classified?

Tony Ingram
Somewhere in the Twilight Zone

CONGRATULATIONS to whoever decided on the new location for the Classified ads page in **CI** #169.

I'm sure relocating page 65 inside a localised spatial warp in order to prevent time wasters from scrutinising the ads will have worked wonderfully, and I confidently predict that you will receive many letters of thanks from advertisers who will have passed a quiet month mercifully untroubled by any unwanted correspondence whatsoever.

Keep it up, guys!

OK, explanation time due. Just when I was trying to stay silent so we could fit in more of your opinions. It was just one of those glitches. The page left us, via Leonardo SP Hermstedt, a supposedly foolproof bit of kit. But somehow it never made it to our Scottish printer. Apologies to all affected.

Reviewer's farewell

Chris Bowen via e-mail: CapAmerica2@aol.com

IT IS with a heavy heart I make this final communiqué. When taking on this mostly derelict house, I never imagined that it would become an all-consuming fire which engulfed my attention almost all of my waking hours.

Therefore as you will have already surmised I am laying down my pen (well, my key-pressing finger, really) and with an apologetic tone – which is difficult to convey with a computer – I bid the **CI** *Reviews* section farewell.

I barely have time enough to read the once-beloved material which has been an escapist pastime for most of my (whisper it) 36 years of meagre existence.

I shall nevertheless still enjoy reading the multitudinal morsels of rumour and remark which is **CI**, and the ever-improving retorts of my reviewing colleagues.

A veritable shipload of good fortune to you, and long may you continue to steer the **CI** vessel to ever more prosperous shores of acclaim.

Your humble(d) servant...

Validating verbosity

Ian Murphy via e-mail: (address withheld by request)

I THINK it's important to respond to some of the questions previously raised, but it's taken me some time – ever the obsessive perfectionist – to find a satisfactory way to express myself.

Martin Gray's letter (**CI** #169) raised some interesting points about reviewing that I'd like to expand upon. I am instinctively verbose, both in person and on paper (which I don't see as a problem), and my grammar is weaker than it could be (which can be a problem). While acknowledging some grammatical weaknesses, my principle aim is to make my voice understood, to accurately describe my own personal response, not to adhere to ancient rules once used to separate the educated from the ignorant. If readers can "usually work out" what I mean, I'm fairly happy.

It's a persistent problem for any reviewer to find fresh ways to describe a creator's work. There are limited ways to describe comics before sounding repetitive, so the challenge is to identify new ways, more varied metaphors and images, to describe material; descriptions which editors, where they fear confusion, should seek to clarify.

I don't assume that readers have a problem with 'big' words; I won't eliminate all complicated or multi-syllabic words in case some readers don't understand them. I've no intention of 'dumbing

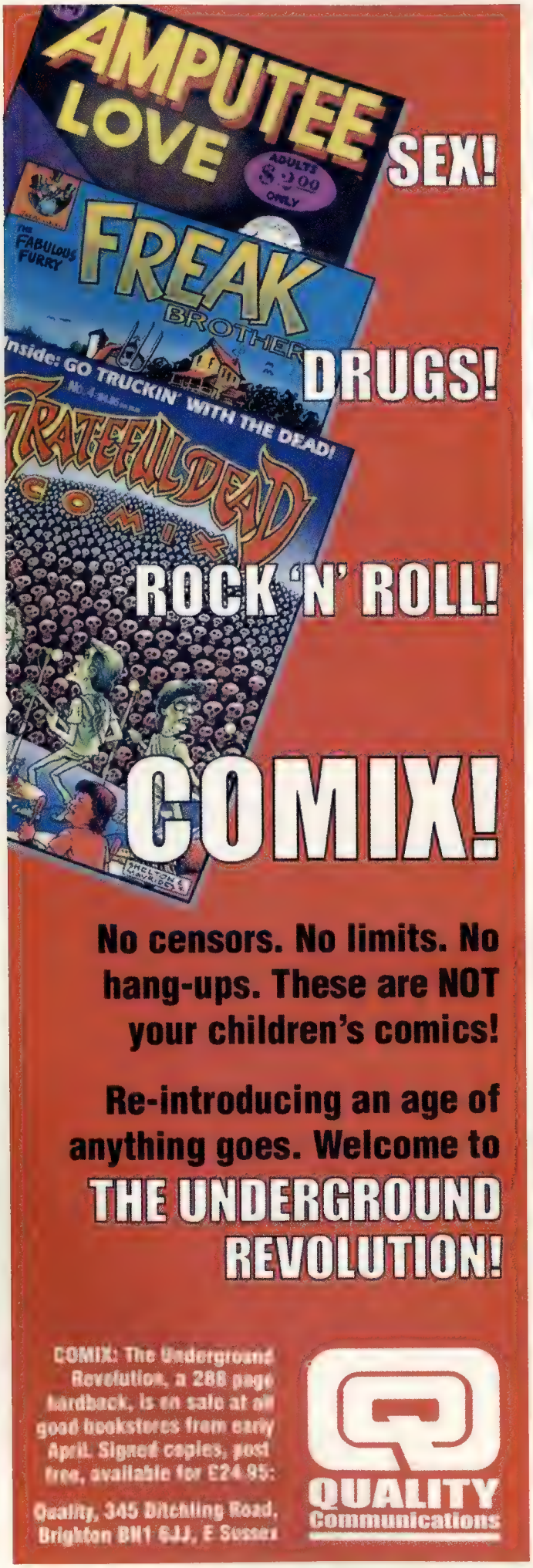
Mike Kazybrid's COMIC CUTS

Script by Paul Kristian

I SEE YOU'VE WRITTEN ON THIS DIVIDER BLACK PANTHER, VERY RARE SERIES. BRILLIANT JACK KIRBY ART- DRAWN BY 'THE KING' AT THE HEIGHT OF HIS POWERS...
BUT THE DEALER ACROSS THE HALL SAYS THIS SERIES IS AS COMMON AS MUCK AND THE ARTWORK IS ONLY AVERAGE !!
WELL MAYBE THE DEALER ACROSS THE HALL DOESN'T HAVE TWENTY BOXES OF THE THINGS IN HIS STOCK ROOM !!
KAZYBRID

Send your script ideas to the above address and you receive the original art if yours is published.

Please note: All scripts are submitted on the understanding they become the copyright property of Kazybrid, Skinn and Comics International.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down' to a level that even the most linguistically-challenged might understand, but I do recognise my responsibility to ensure that reviews are comprehensible, that there is a sense to them that is recognisable beyond my own experience and appreciation.

As for the insinuation that Saturnyne and I are in fact the same person, I am reluctant to disappoint but can confirm that we are indeed independent personages. I have, however, long known Saturnyne, with whom I share an exciting, warm and frequently challenging but enjoyable relationship. When Saturnyne first wrote to **CI**, and with an aside praised my reviews, I immediately contacted the editor to make clear that we knew each other intimately and that the opinion offered was biased. I'd also like to point out that I wasn't defending Saturnyne's arguments or critique of **Sandman**, just the right to privacy and to withhold contact details.

I'm pleased that my work was granted such close attention; reviewing, as a discipline, is too often dismissed. All thoughtful criticism is welcome, be it directly or through public forums like this.

Reviews integrity

Rob Nott via e-mail: jconstantine@claranet.co.uk

I WAS surprised to see a letter from Martin Eden bemoaning the lack of a 10 rating *(Letters,* **CI** #169). But it does raise two interesting points concerning reviews: the subject of the scores themselves, and whether an editor should adjust them.

Someone told me the other day that, quote, "You're a very harsh reviewer. Even when you like something you only give it a 7.".

I think this highlights the problem with the way people respond to reviews, because a lot of people don't seem to realise that a score of 7 is actually very good.

CI used to print a guide to what the scores meant and, trust me on this, 7 was a very worthy rating. But now people seem to expect extremes at either end of the scale.

How many times have we seen PlayStation games quoting reviews such as: 'Awesome! – 93%' and 'This Kicks Ass – 9/10'? Scores of 9 or 10 should be very rare indeed and they should be reserved for the best material currently being published within the medium.

CI has a reputation for honest reviews, sometimes harsh, sometimes sarcastic, but always honest opinions, unencumbered by reviewers forming relationships with the publishers, artists or writers involved. The reviewers have no self interests to promote when it comes to writing reviews, and that makes our reviews more reliable than most.

If **CI** feels that a review isn't giving an accurate reflection of a comic's worth, it has the right to do something about it. If it doesn't, it runs the risk of compromising the integrity of the magazine. If I submitted a host of reviews full of 9s and 10s for run of the mill titles, **CI** would be within its rights to reject them and perhaps suggest to me "Wouldn't you perhaps be happier reviewing comics for a website instead?"

Readers rely on accurate reviews, otherwise the reviews lose their value to inform and advise. Now, I haven't read **O Men**, so I can't comment on the storytelling and exposition, but I have seen some promotional art and I'm afraid it isn't what I'd call world class, 10/10 material. As far as the amateur press is concerned it's good quality, but semi-professional at best. It doesn't rate with the best work by Neal Adams, Barry Smith, Jim Steranko, Bernie Wrightson, Mike Ploog, Jack Kirby, P Craig Russell, Don Lawrence or any of the other greats that I grew up with. And it doesn't compare with the best work currently being produced by Alex Maleev, Bryan Hitch, and John Cassaday, to name just a few.

I don't want to come across all *Pop Idol* here, but **O Men** is a big fish in a very small self-publishing pond, and it doesn't punch its weight artwise against the big boys. I suspect it's very fortunate to get a 9 as often as it does. That's not to say that it isn't a worthy title, but we do need to keep a sense of proportion here, please.

An anti-rant rant

Danny Conway via e-mail: Lamya007@aol.com

LETTERS has become increasingly clogged with one-on-one rants between people within the comics industry who know each other, or are at least acquaintances.

Personally, this is not why I regularly buy **CI**. You fellas don't come across very well in these little trysts, and from a reluctant spectator's point of view, I can never remember who made what clever points by the end anyway. If you're all part of some secret society hell-bent on establishing 'comic book guy from *The Simpsons*' as the only image of the industry to outsiders, this clever tactic may be your most successful to date.

In an attempt to change the mood of *Letters* may I suggest you start a monthly Q&A and print the results in a Top Ten. How about, 'What one comic or graphic novel would you recommend to a comics virgin?'. Mine would be **Hellboy: Chained Coffin**, **Planetary** #1 or **Daredevil: Born Again**. Or 'What is the best response you've ever got from the partner after she/he eventually read your favourite comic?'. "Is that it?"

Or, better still, we could start posting in our best 'Guess what the fella in my local comic shop did last week?'.

A funny little bloke in a funny little comics shop in Reading's effort: "NO, IT'S NOT FOR SALE! CAN'T YOU READ THE SIGN?"

Directory

An at-a-glance reference guide to everything that counts in comics

Internet Listings

Comics creators

Jessica Abel ..... www.artbabe.com
Neal Adams ..... www.nealadams.com
Kyle Baker ..... www.kylebaker.com
Leo Baxendale ..... www.reaper.co.uk/main.htm
Brian Bolland Art ..... www.velouria.com/Bolland
Mark Bright ..... www.mdbright.com
Eddie Campbell ..... www.eddiecampbellcomics.com
John Cassaday ..... www.johncassaday.com
Gene Colan ..... www.genecolan.com
Chuck Dixon ..... www.dixonverse.com
Will Eisner ..... www.willeisner.tripod.com
Warren Ellis ..... www.warrenellis.com
Phil Foglio ..... www.studiofoglio.com
Jon Haward ..... www.jonhawardart.com
Jeff Jones ..... www.jeffreyjones.com
Bob Layton ..... www.boblayton.com
Joseph Michael Linsner ..... www.linsner.com
Tom Lyle ..... www.tomlyle.com
Scott McCloud ..... www.scottmcloud.com
Grant Morrison ..... www.grant-morrison.com
Alex Ross Art ..... www.alexrossart.com
Dave Stevens ..... www.davestevens.com
William Stout ..... www.williamstout.com
Bryan Talbot ..... www.bryan-talbot.com
Barry Windsor-Smith .. www.barrywindsor-smith.com
Bernie Wrightson ..... www.berniewrightson.com

Comics publishers

Abstract Studios ..... www.strangersinparadise.com
AC Comics ..... www.accomics.com
Acclaim ..... www.acclaim.com/comics
AiT/Planet Lar ..... www.astronautsintrouble.com
Antarctic Press ..... www.antarctic-press.com
Archie Comic Publications .. www.archiecomics.com
Caliber Comics ..... www.calibercomics.com
Cartoon Books ..... www.boneville.com
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Drawn and Quarterly ... www.drawnandquarterly.com
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Harris Comics ..... www.vampirella.com
Heavy Metal ..... www.heavymetal.com
Knockabout Comics ..... www.knockabout.com
Marvel Comics ..... www.marvel.com
Northern Lightz ..... www.northernlightz.com
Oni Press ..... www.onipress.com
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Sirius Entertainment . www.sirius.choiceoneonline.com
Todd McFarlane Productions .... www.spawn.com
Top Cow Comics ..... www.topcow.com
TwoMorrows ..... www.twomorrows.com
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Viz (USA) ..... www.viz.com
Viz (UK) ..... www.viz.co.uk
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Angouleme BD (France) ..... www.bdangouleme.com
Comic-Con International (San Diego, USA) ..... www.comic-con.org
Megacon (Florida, USA) .. www.megaconvention.com
Raptus International Festival (Norway) www.raptus.no
Scottish Comic, Card & Collectables Fair ..... e-mail: marts@redhotcomics.demon.co.uk
Wizard World (Chicago, USA) www.wizarduniverse.com

New and back issue dealers

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Avalon Comics ..... www.avaloncomics.co.uk
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Speeding Bullet ..... www.speedingbulletcomics.co.uk

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By popular demand, **Comics International** now runs an at-a-glance overview of the major sites for on-line comics collectors and creators. Have your company listed for only £5 (US $8) a month. Bookable in six-issue blocks, companies wishing to be included should send £30 or US $40 (UK: please add £5.25 to cover VAT) with trading name and website address.

♦ Major companies requiring bold and boxed entries should send £60 + £10.50 VAT per six-issue series, US $80 (£10/$16 per issue) and may add three lines of descriptive copy. Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International and sent to:
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Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail details to: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

Retail Index: UK

Key to the abbreviations used:

imp = air imported new issues
back = back issues stocked
gn = graphic novels
tpbk = trade paperbacks
STO = standing order service (new comics reserved)
s-p = small press and fanzines
ind = independent comics
u/g = underground comix
prl = peripherals/supplies
RPG = role playing games
CCG = customisable card games
merch = trading cards, videos, t-shirts, posters, etc
Sorry, no websites, this is a shop guide

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Central London

Avalon Comics, 143 Lavender Hill, Battersea, London SW11 5QJ. Mon-Thurs 10-5.45; Fri 10-6.30; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 11-3.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 020 7924 3609

Book & Comic Exchange, 14 Pembridge Road, Notting Hill Gate, London W11. Mon-Sun 10-8. Nothing legal refused! (back, ind, u/g) 020 7229 8420

Comic Showcase 63 Charing Cross Road, London WC2H 0NE. Sun-Wed 10-7; Thurs-Fri 10-8; Sat 9.30-8 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, cartoon books, original art) 020 7434 4349

Forbidden Planet Megastore, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-7; Sun 12-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, sci-fi/fantasy, books, video/DVD, games, mags, toys) 020 7420 3666

Gosh!, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (opposite British Museum). Mon-Sun 10-6 (Thurs-Fri to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, foreign, largest range newspaper strip compilations in UK) 020 7636 1011

Mega-City Comics, 18 Inverness Street, Camden Town, London NW1 7HJ. Mon-Sun 10-6 (Thurs-Fri to 7) (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV, fantasy/horror, body art, subculture) 020 7485 9320

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftsbury Avenue, London WC2H 8EH. Mon-Wed 10.30-6.30; Thurs-Sat 10-7; Sun 10-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, fllm/TV/fantasy) 020 7836 5630

Orbital, 9 Old Compton Street, London W1. Mon-Sat 10.30-7; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, manga, toys, Star Wars) 020 7434 9363

Outer London

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, prl, merch, sci-fi, original art) 020 8686 2400

Ashcan Ltd, 3 Eagle Star House, 299-301 High Street, Sutton, Surrey SM1 1LG. Tues-Wed/Fri 12-5; Thurs 9-6; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 0845 166 2532

Atomic Comics, 1112 High Road, Chadwell Heath, Romford, Essex RM6 4AH. Mon-Tues 10.30-5.30; Wed 1-5.30; Thurs-Fri 10.30-6; Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, art books, Games Workshop, toys, kits) 020 8597 8547

Calamity Comics, 160 Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2HR. Mon-Wed 10-6, (Thurs-Fri to 7); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, fantasy film/TV, books, videos) 020 8427 3831

Epic Heroes, 21/23 Station Road, Edgware, Middlesex HA8 7JE. Mon-Sat 10-6. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, toys, posters, Transformers)

Forbidden Planet, 175 North End, Croydon CR0 1TP. Mon-Fri 10-6 (Thursday to 7); Sat 9.30-6. (back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, u/g, CCG, merch) 020 8688 7190

Into the Void, 262 Streatham High Road, Streatham SW16 1HS. Mon-Sat 9.30-7; Sun 11-3. (imp, back, STO, merch, toys) 020 8677 7037

Krypton Komics, 252 High Road, Tottenham, London N15 4AJ (next to Tesco) Tues-Wed 11-6; Thurs 10.30-7; Fri 10.30-6; Sat 10-6 Nearest Tube: Seven Sisters Road. (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind) 020 8801 5378 fax: 8376 3174

They Walk Among Us, 26 Red Lion Street, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1RW. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 6); Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, fantasy/sci-fi/horror, subculture) tel/fax: 020 8948 8476

30th Century Comics, 18 Lower Richmond Road, London SW15 1JP. Mon-Wed 10.30-6; Thurs-Fri 10.30-7; Sat 10.30-6; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, Gold/Silver/Bronze Age specialists, British comics/annuals, books) 020 8788 2052

South East

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch) 01206 561912

The American Comic Shop, 1 Church Street, Chatham, Kent ME4 4BS (off High Street). Mon-Fri 10-5.30 (Tues until 5); Sat 9-5.30. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, action figures) 01634 817410

Calamity Comics 2, 90 Queens Road, The Broadway, Watford WD1 2LA. Mon-Tues 10-5.30; Thurs/Fri 10-7; Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, fantasy film/TV, books, videos) 01923 249293

Cartoon Shop, 19 East Square, Basildon, Essex SS14 1HT. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01268 534194

Central City Comics, 4 Eagle Street, Ipswich, Suffolk IP4 1JB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, foreign) 01473 233017

Chaos City, 20 Heritage Close, (off High Street), St Albans, Herts AL3 4EB. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri 10-7.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 01727 838719

Comic Showcase, 19-20 St Clements Street, Oxford OX4 1AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01865 723680

Comix-shop.co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead SL6 1JN. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, tpbk, gn, merch, CCG, toys) 01628 777998

David's Comic Shop, 5 Sydney Street, Brighton, Sussex BN1 4EN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.45; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g) 01273 691012

Daydream Nation Trading Cards at Hive, 6 Kensington Gardens, Brighton BN1 4AL. Mon-Sat 10-6 (CCGs, cards, sports, Ultra-Pro) 01273 687 877

Forbidden Planet, 60 Burleigh Street, Cambridge CB1 1DJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, CCG, merch, videos, sci-fi/fantasy books, film/TV magazines) 01223 301666

Forbidden Planet, 44 The Priory Centre, Dartford, Kent DA1 2HS. Mon-Wed 10.30-5.30; Thurs-Sat 10-5.30 (back, gn, ind, PRG, CCG, merch) 01322 224837

Incognito Comic Shop, 1-2 The Friars, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2AS. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film/TV) tel/fax: 01227 785898

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton LU1 2TP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, STO, s-p, CCG, merch, Star Trek/Wars, sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Planet Ace, 324-325 Chartwell North, Top Floor, Victoria Plaza, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5SR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 01702 613021

NEW **Steve's Comics**, The Bookstall, Beckenham Junction Station, Rectory Road, Beckenham BR3 1HY. Mon-Fri 6-7; Sat 7-5 (back – Marvel, DC – ind, British comics, tpbk) 01753 521594

Slough Computers, 50 Village Shopping Centre, Slough, Berks SL1 1HP. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, STO, ind, cards, second hand computer games) 01753 521594

Time Trek, 46 High Street, Bromley, Kent BR1 1EG. Mon-Wed/Fri 9.30-5.30; Thurs 10-8; Sat 10-5.30; Sun 10-4 (imp, back, ind, gn, merch, STO, CCG, prl, sf TV/film) 020 8313 0677

Whatever Comics, 2 Burgate Lane, Canterbury, Kent CT1 2HH. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, kits) 01227 453226

Whatever Comics, 5 Middle Row, High Street, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1TF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, model kits) 01622 681041

Midlands

Abstract Sprocket, 29 St Benedicts Street, Norwich, Norfolk NR2 4PF. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01603 624410

Another World, 42/43 Main Centre (opposite Wilkinsons) Derby. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, merch, rock/film/TV memorabilia, computer games) 01332 206606

Another World, 23 Silver Street, Leicester LE1 5EU. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, alchemy metalware, rock memorabilia) 01162 515266

Another World, 11 Market Street, Nottingham. Mon-Fri 9-5.30; Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, foreign, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01159 484122

Another World, 52 Stafford Street, Hanley, Stoke-on-Trent ST1 1JB. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01782 279294 fax: 202381 Mail Order: 271750

Another World, 23 Victoria Street, Wolverhampton WV1 3NP. Mon-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5.30; Sun 12-4 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, rock memorabilia, alchemy metalware) 01902 717440

Comic Culture, The Mall, 257-259 High Street, Lincoln LN2 1HX. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl) 01522 546611

Forbidden Planet, 31 Cross Cheaping, Coventry CV1 1HF. Mon-Sat 9.30-6 (Thurs to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV) 024 76229672

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 129 Middle Walk, Broadmarsh Centre, Nottingham NG1 7LN. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 0115 958 4706

Forbidden Planet Superstore, 38 Priory Queensway, Birmingham B4 7LA. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs-Fri to 6) (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, books, games, mags, kits, toys, videos) 0121 236 3026

Ground Zero, 9 Toothill Lane, Mansfield, Nottinghamshire NG18 1NJ. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, prl, CCG, merch, toys) 01623 622017

Nostalgia & Comics (FPI), 14-16 Smallbrook, Queensway, Birmingham. Mon-Thurs 9.15-5.45; Fri-Sat 9.15-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0121 643 0143

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY. Mon-Sat 9-6. (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, manga) 0115 950 8045

Phoenix Comix, 29 Abington Square, Northampton NN1 4AE. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, RPG, CCG, action figures) 01604 602311

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 6 East Street, Derby DE1. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, fantasy books, film/TV) 0115 950 9231

Travelling Man, c/o Gamestation, 1st Floor, 16 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures, miniatures) 0115 950 9231

North West

All-American, 102 Newport Street, Bolton BL3 6AB. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, STO, merch, Star Wars, WWF, action figures, S/Age, videos, records, CDs) 01204 366553

Alpha Omega Comics, 33-35 Library Street, Wigan, Lancs WN1 1NN. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, merch, videos) 07796 854644

Forbidden Planet, 92 Bold Street, Liverpool L1 4HY. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 7) (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV, sci-fi/horror) 0151 707 1491

Forbidden Planet Megastore (FPI), 65 Oldham Street, Piccadilly, Manchester M1 1JR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (2 floors; imp, back, STO, RPG, CCG, merch, books, toys, film and TV tie-ins, manga) 0161 839 4777

Imagination Station, 41 Bank Street, Carlisle, Cumbria CA3 8HJ. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch)

Millennium Comics, 4 Church Road, Northwich, Cheshire CW9 5NT. Mon-Tues 10-5; Wed closed; Thurs-Fri 10-5.30; Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01606 49255

Moonwalk Collectables, Unit 15, Climax Works, Durham Street (off Station Road), North Redditch SK5 6YZ. Mon-Sat 10-6 (back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, merch, Star Wars and Dr Who specialist, TV/film, British titles) 0161 431 6050

Thunderbooks, 332 Lytham Road, Blackpool FY4 1DW. Mon/Tues/Thurs-Sat (Sun June-Oct inc) 10-5.30; Wed 1-3.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, media collectors' items) 01253 348321 fax: 407813

Thunderbooks II, 116 Friargate, Preston, PR1 9EE. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, RPG, merch) 01772 204287

Time Tunnel, 13 Earle Street, Crewe, Cheshire CW1 2BS. Mon and Wed-Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, merch, film/TV memorabilia, action figures, videos, model kits) 01270 215496

Twin Suns, 127 Blackburn Road, Accrington, Lancashire BB5 0AA. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, RPG, CCG, merch) 01254 386665

Worlds Apart (FPI), 58-60 Lime Street (city centre), Liverpool. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Fri 10-7) (imp, back, STO, ind, merch, film) 0151 707 0839

North East

Books N' Comics, Unit 15, Forbes Building, Linthorpe Road, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 4AW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, fantasy and film magazines, Doctor Who/Star Trek) 01642 249143

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 30 Eastgate, The Headrow, Leeds LS2 7JL. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, LF film books, film/TV mags, posters, toys, kits, trading cards, stills, Star Trek/Doctor Who) 0113 242 6325

Forbidden Planet, 59 Grainger Street, Newcastle NE1 5JE. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, fantasy/sci-fi books, videos) 0191 261 9173

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 41 Dundas Street, Middlesbrough TS1 1HR. Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (Thurs until 7) (imp, gn, s-p, STO, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch, video, action figures, film/TV, manga) 01642 248889

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Matilda, off the Moor, Sheffield. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 9.30- 5.30 (imp, back, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, model kits, sci-fi/fantasy books, horror magazines, newspaper strip books) 0114 276 9475

The Last Picture Show, 38-39 The Lanes, The Oasis, Meadowhall Centre, Sheffield S9 1EP. Mon-Thurs 10-8; Fri 10-9; Sat 9-7, Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, film/TV and rock memorabilia) 0114 256 9604 fax: 255 3399

Millennium Comics, Stall 141, Warrington Indoor Market. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, RPG, merch, action figures, toys) 01925 575657

Off-World Comics, 200 Park View, Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear NE26 3QP. Mon-Tues/Thurs 10-5.30 (closed Wed); Fri 10-6; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch) 0191 251 2288

Sheffield Space Centre, 33 The Wicker, Sheffield. Mon-Sat 10-5 (Wed closed) (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, merch, Star Trek) 0114 275 8905

Travelling Man, Unit 8/9, The Corn Exchange, Call Lane, Leeds LS1 7BR. Mon-Thurs 10-5.30; Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Sun 11-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 0113 242 7227

Travelling Man, 54 Goodramgate, York YO1 2LF. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, merch, action figures) 01904 628787

West Country

American Dream Comics, 72 Walcot Street, Bath BA1 5BD. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, original art, hobby kits, CDs) 01225 424881

Area 51, 143 Gloucester Road, Bristol. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, merch, original art) 0117 924 4655

Automattic Comics, Unit 2, 17 Pickwick Road, Corsham SN13 9BQ. Mon-Tues 12-5; (Wed closed); Thurs-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 01249 701647

Collector's Choice, 45 Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1TX. Mon-Sat 9-5 (S/Age, British comics/annuals, vintage mags, toys, memorabilia) 01452 410232

Forbidden Planet, 30 Penn Street, Bristol BS1 3AS. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 7); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV mags, subculture) 0117 929 8692

Forbidden Planet, 43-45 East Street, Southampton SO14 3HN. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30 (Thurs to 6); Sat 9.30-6 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch, film/TV) 023 80230991 fax: 230996

Ian's Books & Comics, 195a Albert Road, Southsea, Portsmouth PO4 0JP (next to Tesco). Mon-Tues/Thurs-Fri 10.30-5.15 (Wed closed); Sat 10-5.15 (imp, back, tpbk, STO, s-p, prl, toys) 023 92422731

Into the Void, 11 Rodbourne Road, Swindon SN2 2AG. Mon-Sat 9-5 (imp, back, STO, CCG, merch) 01793 434363

Kaboom, 65 High Street, Totnes, Devon TQ10 9PU. (new, back, action figures, t-shirts, board games, RPG, import computer games, mail order) 01803 863049

Kathies Comics, Unit BG29, Broadmead Gallery, The Galleries Shopping Centre, Bristol BS1 3XB. Mon-Wed/Fri-Sat 9-5.30; Thurs 9-6; Sun 11-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0117 922 1170

Kathies Comics, 20 Market Avenue, Plymouth, PL1 1PH. Mon-Fri 9.30-5.30; Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 01752 257800

Paradox Comics, 17 High Street, Poole, Dorset BH15 1AB. Mon-Fri 10.30-5; Sat 10-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, ind, merch, videos) 01202 661346

Wonderworld, 540 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, Bournemouth, Dorset. Mon-Sat 9-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, CCG, merch, film/TV/media, beanie babies) 01202 394918

Wales

NEW **Cardiff's Comic Guru Presents!**, 20-22 Wyndham Arcade, Cardiff CF10 1FJ. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Thurs 'til 9) (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 029 2020 29119

Cardiff Fantasy Centre, 1st Floor, Jacobs Market, West Canal Wharf, Cardiff. Sat 9.30-4.30 (imp, back, STO; established over 20 years) 029 2065 8184 (eves)

Comix Shoppe, 13 Shoppers Walk, Swansea SA1 3AY. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, RPG, CCG, merch, anime, Games W/shop) 01792 642097

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5 Duke St, Cardiff. Mon-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch, sci-fi fantasy/horror books, Star Trek/Wars) 029 2020 8885

Negative Zone, Provision Market Gallery, High Street, Newport, Gwent NP9 1DD. Mon-Sat 9.30-5 (imp, back, gn, STO, s-p, ind; established for 11 years) 01633 222159

Scotland

Asylum Books & Games, 29 Adelphi, Aberdeen AB11 5B2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Mon/Thurs to 8); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, new/second hand RPG, CCG, books, original art) 01224 574637

Black Hole Comic Shop, Unit 3, 5 Victoria Road, Dundee DD1 1ER. Mon-Thurs 10-5; Fri-Sat 10-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, second hand records, CDs, videos) 01382 221037

City Centre Comics, 51 Parnie Street, Glasgow G1 5LU. Tues-Sat 10-5 (back) 0141 552 2208

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 12 Schoolhill, Aberdeen AB10 1JX. Mon-Fri 10-6 (Thurs until 7); Sat 9.30-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, gn, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, CCG, merch) 01224 622131

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 40-41 South Bridge, Edinburgh EH1 1LL. Mon-Wed 10-5.30; Thurs 10-6.30; Fri-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5. (imp, STO, s-p, ind, merch, foreign) 0131 558 8226

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 168 Buchanan St, Glasgow G1 2LW. Mon-Sat 10-5.30; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, merch) 0141 331 1215

Justice Comics, Unit 36, The Arcade, Stirling FK8 1AX. Mon-Sat 10-5 (imp, back, STO, ind, merch) 01786 447687

Kapow!, 28 Allison Street, Govanhill, Glasgow G42 8NN (off Pollokshaws Road). Tues-Sat 11-6 (buy and sell back, gn, ind, mags, videos, DVDs, new and second-hand books, merch) 0141 4241600

Plan 9, 9 Rosemount Viaduct, Aberdeen AB25 1NE. Mon-Sat 10-5 (Thurs to 6); Sun 1-4. (imp, back, STO, ind, RPG, CCG, WWF, merch, sci-fi) tel/fax: 01224 624467

Red Hot Comics, Block D Unit 7, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH. Sat 11.30-6; Sun 12-5 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, CCG, merch) 0141 630 0049

Northern Ireland

Crosshatch, Unit 8, Smithfield Market, Belfast BT1 1JD. Mon-Fri 10-5; Sat 10-5.30 (original art, prints, autographs, cover recreations) 07739 871415

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 47 Winetavern Street, Belfast BT1 1JQ Mon-Sat 9.30-5.30 (imp, back, STO, ind, u/g, merch) 028 90438744

Planet Ace Derry, 33 Shipquat St, Derry, Londonderry BT48 6DF. Mon-Sat 10-6 (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) 02871 369787

Retail Index: USA

When telephoning from outside the USA, include the bracketed 00. Out-of-town US calls begin with the 1 prefix only. The following is a fraction of the estimated 3,000+ US comics stores.

Alabama

Optic Nerve, 1930 12th Avenue South, Birmingham, AL 35205 (film, newsstand, ind) (00)1 205 933 2787

Alaska

Bosco's in Spenard, 2606 Spenard Road, Anchorage 99503. Mon-Sat 11-8, Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, merch) (00) 1 907 274 4112

Bosco's Diamond Centre, 800 East Diamond Boulevard, Anchorage 99577. Mon-Fri 10-9; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, anime, games, Star Wars/Trek) (00) 1 907 344 3963

Bosco's in Eagle River, 11432 Business Boulevard, Eagle River. Mon-Sat 12-8, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, cards, merch) (00) 1 907 696 5166

Arizona

Lost Dutchman, 747 West Camelback Road, Phoenix, AZ 85013. Mon-Sun 10-7. (new, back) (00)1 619 278 0371

California

Comickaze, 5525 Clairemont Mesa Boulevard, San Diego, CA 62117-2342. Mon-Fri 11-7; Sat 11-6; Sun 12-6 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 858 278 0371

Comix Experience, 305 Divisadero Street, San Francisco, CA 94117. Mon-Sat 11-7; Sun 12-5 (new, back) (00)1 415 863 9258

Flying Colors Comics, 2980 Treat Blvd, Concord, CA 94518. Mon Sat 11-7 (Fri until 8); Sun 12-6 (new, back, ind, cards, merch) (00)1 510 825 5410

Lee's Comics, Inc., 1020-F N Rengstorff Avenue, Mountain View, CA 94043. Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, s-p, adult, merch) (00)1 650 965 1800

Lee's Comics, Inc., 2222 South El Camino Real, San Mateo, CA 94403. Mon-Sun 10-9, (new, back: 1930s to date, anime, manga, adult, s-p, merch) (00)1 650 571 1489

Meltdown Comics & Collectibles, 7522 Sunset Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA 90046 (toys, comics, books) (00)1 323 851 7223

Stand-Up Comics, 10020 San Pablo Avenue, El Cerrito, CA 94530. Mon-Fri 11 7; Sat-Sun 11-6 (new, back, cards, anime, CCG, merch) (00)1 510 525 3344

Third Planet, 3822 Sepulveda Boulevard, Torrance, CA 90505. Sun-Thurs 11-8; Fri + Sat 11-9 (new, ind, back, CCG, RPG, GW, sci-fi/fantasy, anime, merch) (00)1 310 791 6227

Hawaii

Gecko Books & Comics, 3613 Waialae Avenue, Honolulu, 96816. Mon-Sun 9-9 (new, back, cards, toys, merch) (00)1 808 732 1292

Illinois

Comic Kingdom, 5941 W Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60634. (new, back) (00)1 773 545 2231

Louisiana

Comic Cosmos, 343 W Esplanade Avenue, Kenner, LA 70065. Mon-Thur 11.30-7, Fri-Sat 11-7.30, Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, CCG, toys, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

Crescent City Comics & Cards, 6111 Elysian Fields, New Orleans, LA 70122. Mon-Sat 11-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, anime) (00)1 504 286 0039

More Fun Comics, 8200 Oak Street, New Orleans, LA 70118. Tues-Sat 11-7, Sun-Mon 12-6 (new, back, cards, CCG, merch, toys, CDs) (00)1 504 865 1800

Maine

Casablanca Comics, 151 Middle Street, Portland, ME 04101. Mon-Sat 10-9, Sun 12-7 (new, back, cards, CCG, RPG, merch, art) (00)1 207 780 1676

Casablanca Comics, 778 Roosevelt Trail, Windham, ME 04062. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, CCG, RPG, merch)(00)1 207 892 0056

Massachusetts

Comicopia, 464 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02215. Mon-Sun 11-7 (Wed 10-8) (new, merch, CCG, manga, tpbk)(00)1 617 266 4266

Minnesota

Uncle Sven's Comic Shoppe, 1838 St Clair Avenue, Saint Paul, MN 55105. Mon-Fri 3-6, Sat 11-4 (new, back, tpbk, gn, videos, action figures, CCG, RPG; est 19 years) (00)1 651 699 3409

New York State

Earthworld Comics, 327 Central Avenue, Albany, NY 12206. Mon-Wed 11-6; Thur-Fri 11-7, Sat 11-6, Sun 12-5 (new, back, ind, manga/anime, cards, merch) (00)1 518 465 5495

Forbidden Planet (FPI associate), 840 Broadway (at 13th St, NY 10003. Mon-Sat 10-10; Sun 12-10. (new, ind, back, RPG, merch, fantasy) (00)1 212 473 1576

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 4 West 33rd Street (opposite Empire State Building), NY 10001. Mon-Sat 9am-11pm; Sun 10-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 212 268 7088

Jim Hanley's Universe Ltd, 325 New Dorp Lane, Staten Island, NY 10306. Mon-Sun; 12-9. (Everything to do with comics) (00)1 718 351 6299

Midtown Comics, 200 West 40th Street, NY 10018 (00)1 212 302-8192

Ohio

The Laughing Ogre, 4258 North High Street, Columbus, Ohio 43214. Mon-Sat 10-9; Sun 12-5 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 614 267 6473

Oklahoma

Time Warp, 588 SE Washington Street, Bartlesville, OK 74006 (new, back, cards, games, toys, CDs, sci-fi/fantasy) (00)1 918 335 3373

Pennsylvania

Comic Castle, 17 West Fourth Street, Williamsport, PA 17703 Mon-Sun 10-9 (new, back) (00)1 717 322 8763

Golden Eagle, Berkshire Square, 1159 Berkshire Boulevard, Wyoming, PA 19610 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 376 8255

Golden Eagle, Fairgrounds Square Mall, Reading, PA 19605 (new, back, games, CCG, cards, Star Wars/Trek) (00)1 610 921 3160

Tennessee

Collector's World, 1511 E Main Street, Murfreesboro, TN 37130. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, Hickory Plaza South Central, 5751 Nolensville Road, Nashville, TN 37211. Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 615 895 1120

Collector's World, 10820 Kingston Park #10, Knoxville, TN 37922 Open all week (new, back, CCG, merch, cards, CDs) (00)1 423 675 6830

Collector's World, 4006 Granny White Park, Nashville, TN 37204 (new, back, CCG, merch)(00)1 615 385 8136

Texas

Cliff's Comics, 2205 West Berry Street, Fort Worth, TX 76110. (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 817 927 7172

Collectible Heroes, 502 West Calton Road #307, Laredo, TX 78041. Mon-Wed 2-7.30; Thurs-Sat 11.30-7.30 (new, back, cards, merch) (00)1 956 791 8428

Dragon's Lair Comics & Fantasy, 616 West 34th Street, Austin, TX 78705 (new, back, games, anime, miniatures, prl) (00)1 512 454 2399

Virginia

Thore Comics, 3514 Oaklawn Boulevard, Hopewell, VA 23860. Mon-Sat 11-7, (new, back, Silver Age, sci-fi, M:TG, cards, vinyl)(00)1 804 458 9561

Trilogy Shop, 700 E Little Creek Road, Norfolk, VA 23518. Mon-Fri 11-7, Sat 10-7, Sun 12-6 (new, back, merch) (00)1 757 587 2540

Wisconsin

Lost World of Wonders, 6713 West Oklahoma Avenue; Milwaukee, WI 53219 (00)1 414 328 4651

Direct Market Retailers:

Comics International's Retail Index is THE international retail reference source for collectors, creators, publishers and journalists. Through it you can reach over 40,000 dedicated readers each issue for only £6 (US $10) a month! Bookable in six-issue blocks, retailers wishing to be included should send US $60 or £36 (UK: please add £6.30 to cover VAT @ 17.5%) plus shop information as detailed on previous page to:

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

The letters **(FPI)** after various entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Retailers: International

Australia

Arcadia Unbound, 267 Forest Road, Hurstville, NSW 2220. Mon-Fri 10.30-7, Sat 10-4, Sun 12-3 (imp, back, manga, merch, CCG) (0061) 2 9585 1489

Books & Bounties/Comics Haven, 157a Charters Towers Road, Townsville, Queensland 4812. Mon-Sat 9-6 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG, CCG) (0061) 7 4779 2408

Fan Attic, 1st Floor, 91 Elizabeth Street, Brisbane, Queensland 4002. Mon-Sun 9.30-5.30 (toys, Star Wars, sci-fi collectibles) (0061) 7 3221 1420

Kinda Lotsa Comics and Stuff, Shop 4, 503-511 King Street, Newtown, Sydney, NSW. Mon-Sat 10.30-7.30 (back, toys, merch)(0061) 2 9565 1054

Known Space Books, 1st Floor, 108 Gawler Place, Adelaide, SA 5000. Wed-Sat 12-6 (US/UK back) (0061) 8 8223 4304

Phantom Zone, 23 Anderson Street, Chatswood, NSW 2067. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9411 3709

Phantom Zone, 198 Mann Street, Gosford, NSW 2250. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 43 25 4599

Phantom Zone, 207 George Street, Liverpool, NSW. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9601 2622

Phantom Zone, 285 Hunter Street, Newcastle, NSW. 2300. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4. (imp, back, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4929 5717

Phantom Zone, 101a Argyle Street, Parramatta, NSW 2150 Mon-Fri 9-6; Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, books, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 9891 1848

Phantom Zone, 268 Crown Street, Wollongong, NSW. 2500. Mon-Fri 9-6, Sat-Sun 9-4 (imp, back, gn, merch, RPG) (0061) 2 4228 7393

Austria

Comic Treff, Getreidemarkt 2-4, 1010 Vienna. Mon-Fri 10-7, Sat 10-1 (imp, back, gn, CCG) (0043) 11 586 76 27

Belgium

Forbidden Zone, 25 Rue de Tamines, 1060 Brussels. (3 floors; imp, back, merch, US/French, STO, toys) (0032 2) 534 63 67 (fax 538 24 52)

Canada

Connection MD, 1539 Van Horne Avenue, Montreal, Quebec H2V 1L4. Mon-Sat 11-6 (new, merch, back, CCG) (00)1 514 948 2627

Dragon Lady Comics & Paper Nostalgia, 609 College Street, Toronto, Ontario M6G 1B5. (00)1 416 536 7460

Little Shop of Heroes, 160 Wallace Avenue, South Listowel, Ontario N4W 1X9 (00)1 519 291 2281

Silver Snail Comic Shop, 367 Queen Street West, Toronto M5V 2A4. Mon-Wed 10-6; Thurs-Fri 11-8; Sat 10-6; Sun 12-5 (00)1 416 593 0889

France

Album, 67 boulevard St Germain, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 53 10 00 60

Album, 6 rue Dante, 75005 Paris. Mon-Sat 10-8; Sun 12-7 (imp, back, gn) (0033) 43 54 67 09

Alpha Omega, 25 rue de la Clef, 59800 Lille. Mon 2.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 10.30-12.30/2.30-7.30 (imp, back, French, merch, trading/gaming cards, toys, RPG, Wars/Trek, B5, L5R) (0033) 320 319 375

Astro City, 22 rue Masurel, 59800 Lille. Mon 3-7.30; Tue-Sat 10-12.30, 2-7.30 (imp, manga, cards, merch, kits) (0033) 320 55 1010

Impact Comics, 64 rue Condorcet, 75009 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, merch, CCG)(0033) 42 80 30 10

L'Antre des Dragons, 56 rue de Loup, 33000 Bordeaux. Mon-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0033) 55 65 17378

Les Nageurs de Sable, 14 rue Courteline, 37058 Tours. Mon-Sat 11-1/2-7 (imp, back, cards, merch) (0033) 2 47 39 52 40

Pulps, 14 bld Morland, 75004 Paris. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, RPG) (0033) 1 42 72 55 25

Germany

Black Dog Comics, Rodenberg Strasse 9, 10439 Berlin. Mon-Fri 11-6.30, Sat 11-2 (imp, back, gn, t/cards) (0049) 30 4473 6486

Grober Unfug, Zossenerstrasse 32-33, 10961 Berlin. Mon-Sat 11-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0049) 30 6940 1490

Greece

Metropolis Comics, 94 Metropoleos St, 54622 Thessaloniki. Mon-Sat 10.30-3.30/7.30-11.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0030) 3 193 7775

Solaris, 6 Botasi Str, 10682, Athens. Mon-Sat 9-3.30/5-8.30 (imp, back, gn, merch) (0030) 1 384 1065

Holland

Henk Lie's Comics & Manga Store, Zeeduk 104, 1012BB Amsterdam. Mon-Sat 11-6; Sun 11-9 (imp, cards, merch, CCG) (0031) 20 421 3688

Hungary

Troll Kepregenyta'r, Terez Krt 13, Budapest 1067. Mon-Fri 10-6, Sat 10-1(imp, manga, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0036) 1 322 6026

Irish Republic

Forbidden Planet (FPI), 5-6 Crompton Quay, Dublin 2. Mon-Sat 10-6 (Thurs 10-7); Sun 12-5 (imp, back, ind, merch, u/g, UK, gn, STO) (0035) 3167 10688

Sub-City Comics, 2 Exchequer Street, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3167 71902

Sub-City Comics, Unit 10, Level 1, Corbettcourt Centre, Eyre Square, Galway. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, u/g, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3915 65994

The 3rd Place, Crow Street, Temple Bar, Dublin 2. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, STO, s-p, ind, prl, RPG, CCG, merch) (0035) 3163 36965

Italy

Avalon, via Battisti 9/b, Bologna. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 051 234459

Avalon, via Pedriali 21, Forli. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 0543 33523

Avalon, via Settembrini 20, Milan. Mon 3.30-7.30, Tue-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 022 9400410

Avalon, via Foscolo 3, Padova. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7. (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch)(0039) 049 658290

Avalon, via Bissolati 68, Rome. Mon 3-7, Tue-Sat 10-1/2-7 (imp, back, gn, CCG, cards, merch)

Avalon, via Magenta 0, Torino. Mon 3.30-7, Tue-Sat 10.30-1, 2-7.30 (imp, back, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0039) 011 5617252

Forbidden Planet, via Pinerolo 11/15, 00182 Rome (imp, back, gn) (0039) 06 70305702

Il Marchio Giallo, via Deghi Scipioni 116, Rome. Tue-Sat 10.30-1/2-7.30 (imp, back, merch, kits) (0039) 06 361 40 60

La Borsa del Fumetto, via Lecco 16, 20124 Milano. (imp, back, European and RPG, CCG) (0039) 11 5617252

Malaysia

The Mind Shop, Starhill Centre, Jalang Bukit Bintag, Kuala Lumpur. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 241 8871

The Mind Shop, S 58 Bandar Utama, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 719 8246

The Mind Shop, Jin SS21/39, Petaling Jaya. Mon-Sat 11-10 (imp, CCG, RPG, merch) (00603) 717 6602

New Zealand

Heroes For Sale, Level 2, 62 Queen St, Auckland. Mon-Sat 10-7 (imp, back, s-p, merch, ind, u/g)(0064) 9 307 0682

Whitcoulls Corner Branch, 210 Queen Street, Private Bag 92098, Auckland. (imp, back, gn, tpbk, s-p, merch, ind, u/g) (0064) 9 356 5400 (fax: 9 356 5408)

Portugal

BdMania, Rua das Flores 67-71 R/C, 1200 Lisboa. Mon-Sat 11-7.30 (imp, back, CCG, merch) (00351) 21 346 1207

Interzona, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Loja 203, Rua Luis Veaga Lertao 98-120, 6050 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

Mundo Fantasma, Centro Comercial Brasilia, Rua Luis Veiga Leitao, 98/120, 1 Andar-Loja 203, 4050-399 Porto. Mon-Sat 11-11 (US imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (00351) 22 609 1460

South Africa

Euroniag, Shop 79A, East Rand Mall, Boksburg, Johannesburg. Mon-Sun 9-10 (imp, back, gn, CCG, merch) (0027) 11 896 3773

Zed Bree's Comic Universe, Mediterr-anean Building, 24 Tenth Ave, Edenvale 1610 Gauteng. 9.30-6 (imp, merch, gn, CCG) 002711 453 4215 (fax 453 4459)

Spain

Gigamesh, RDA San Pedro 53, 08010 Barcelona. Mon-Sat 10-1.30/4.30-8 (imp, gn, RPG, CCG, merch) (0034) 3 246 6359

Sweden

Comics Heaven, Stora Nygatan 23, 11127 Stockholm. Mon-Sat 10-6.30 (imp, back, gn, merch)(0046) 8 202516

Switzerland

Analph Comicladen Strassburgstr, 10 PO Box 1030, 8004 Zürich. (0041) 1 2419695 fax 1 2403442

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicate that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

International Festivals

A listing of the world's major comics festivals and conventions. For further information, call the organisers on the phone, fax or e-mail numbers provided. To view updates, contact them on their websites. Organisers' estimates of their previous year's attendance is given in brackets.

April 17-18: England

MEMORABILIA '04, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star Street, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk

May 6-9: Spain

THE 22ND BARCELONA INTERNATIONAL COMIC FESTIVAL. (2003 est: 85,000). Organisers: Ficomic, Palau, 4 Baixos, 08002 Barcelona, Spain. Tel: 0034 93 301 23 69 fax: 0034 93 301 52 26. Website: www.ficomic.com

May 15-16: England

LONDON EXPO, ExCel Convention Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London E16, UK. Organisers:London Expo (EW), PO Box 38727, London E10 7YH. Tel: 020 8523 1074. Website: www.londonexpo.com

May 21-23: Finland

ARCTIC COMICS FESTIVAL, KEMI. Organisers: The Arctic Comics Centre, Rautatienkatu 13 B, FIN-90100 Oulu, Finland. Tel/fax: 00358 400 514 540. Website: www.kemi.fi/sarjis

May 29-30: England

Comics Festival 2004, The Empire and Commonwealth Museum and Ramada Plaza Hotel, Bristol. Organiser: Kev F. Sutherland. Website: www.comicfestival.co.uk

June 10-13: Switzerland

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL DE LA BANDE DESSINEE DE SIERRE. Organisers: Festival BD Sierre, CP 200, CH-3960 Sierre, Switzerland. Tel: 0041 27 455 90 43 fax: 0041 27 455 91 01. Website: www.bdsierre.ch

July 22-25: United States

COMIC-CON INTERNATIONAL '04, San Diego, California. (2003 est: 53,000). Organisers: Comic-Con International, PO Box 128458, San Diego, CA 92112-8458. Tel: 001 619 491 2475 fax: 001 619 414 1022. Website: www.comic-con.org

August 13-15: United States

WIZARD WORLD CHICAGO CON 2004. (2003 est: 35,000) Organisers: Wizard World Chicago, 151 Wells Avenue, Congers, NY 10920-2064. Tel: 001 608 226 0200. Website: www.wizarduniverse.com

August 14-15: England

MEMORABILIA '04, NEC, Birmingham. Organisers: Made in Heaven, 1 Star Street, Moffat, Dumfriesshire DG10 9DR. Tel: 01683 220787 fax: 01683 220798. Website: www.memorabilia.co.uk

August 27-29: Canada

CANADIAN NATIONAL COMIC BOOK EXPO 2004, Metro Toronto Convention Center, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. (2003: 15,000) Website: www.hobbystar.com

September 3-6: United States

DRAGON*CON 2004, Atlanta, Georgia. (2003: 20,000). Organisers: Dragon*Con, PO Box 16459, Atlanta, GA 30321-9998. Tel: 001 770 909 0115 fax: 001 770 909 0112. Website: www.dragoncon.org

September 9-11: Norway

RAPTUS INTERNATIONAL COMICS FESTIVAL. Organisers: Raptus Bergen Comics Festival, PO Box 768, Central 5807 Bergen, Norway. Tel/fax: 0047 55 32 88 55. Website: www.raptus.no

September 11-12: United States

BALTIMORE COMIC-CON, The Baltimore Convention Centre, One West Pratt Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21201. Contact: Marc Nathan. Tel: 001 410 526 7410. Website: www.comicon.com/baltimore

Comics Publishers

North America

Unlike Europe, North American publishers invariably favour indie status to that of being labelled small press. This results in there being hundreds of comics publishers.

While circulations vary immensly, the following are the continent's major comicbook producers with titles printing between 5,000 and 150,000 copies. Contact telephone numbers are given where readily available.

AARDVARK-VANAHEIM, PO Box 1674 Station C, Kitchener, Ontario, Canada N2G 4R2 (Cerebus)

ABSTRACT STUDIOS, PO Box 271487, Houston, TX 77277-1487 (Strangers in Paradise)

AC COMICS, PO Box 521216, Longwood, FL 32752-1216 (adventure titles, Golden Age superhero and western reprints)

ACCLAIM COMICS, 1 Acclaim Plaza, Glen Cove, NY 11542 (game tie-in adventure, Valiant superhero imprint. dormant) (00)1 516 656 5000

AiT/PLANET LAR, 2034 47th Avenue, San Francisco, CA 94116 (graphic novels) (00)1 415 504 7516

ALTERNATIVE COMICS, 503 North West 37th Ave, Gainesville, FL 32609-2204 (alternative and graphic novels) (00)1 352 373 6336

AMERICAN MEDIA CONSUMER ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 600 East Coast Avenue, Lantana, Florida 33464 (Cracked) (00)1 561 586 1111

ANTARCTIC PRESS, 7272 Wurzbach Parkway , Suite 204, San Antonio, Texas TX 78240 (adventure and US manga)

ARCHIE COMIC PUBLICATIONS, 325 Fayette Avenue, Mamaroneck, NY 10543 (humour) (00)1 914 381 5155

AVATAR PRESS, 9 Triumph Drive, Urbana, IL 61802 (horror fantasy titles) (00)1 217 384 2216

AWESOME ENTERTAINMENT, 9744 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 402, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, CA 90212 (adventure titles; dormant)

BONGO ENTERTAINMENT, 1440 South Sepulveda Boulevard, 3rd Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90025 (The Simpsons and related humour titles) (00)1 310 966 6168

CALIBER COMICS, 225 North Sheldon Road, Plymouth, MI 48170 (black and white adventure titles) (00)1 734 462 0457

CARTOON BOOKS, PO Box 16973, Columbus, OH43216 (Bone and related)

CROSSGEN ENTERTAINMENT, INC, 4023 Tampa Road, Suite 2400, Oldsmar, FL 34677 (fantasy adventure) (00)1 813 891 1702

CRUSADE FINE ARTS LTD, PO Box 845, Bayport, NY 11705 (fantasy and adventure) (00)1 631 472 2866

DARK HORSE COMICS, 10956 South East Main Street, Milwaukie, OR 97222 (adventure titles, licensed, US and Japanese manga) (00)1 503 652 8815

DC COMICS, 1700 Broadway, NY 10019 (adventure and humour, MAD, Vertigo and Paradox Press imprints) (00)1 212 636 5400

DRAWN & QUARTERLY, PO Box 48056, Montreal, Quebec, H2V 4SB, Canada (black and white biog)

DREAMWAVE PRODUCTIONS, 11 Allstate Parkway, Suite 200, Markham, Ontario L3R 9T8, Canada

DYNAMIC FORCES, 155 Ninth Avenue, Suite E, Runnemede, NJ 08078 (variant editions and merchandise) (00)1 856 312 1040

FANTAGRAPHICS BOOKS, 7563 Lake City Way North East, Seattle, Washington 98115 (adventure, biographical and Eros adult) (00)1 206 524 1967

HARRIS COMICS, 1115 Broadway, 8th Floor, NY 10010 (Vampirella, fantasy and horror) (00)1 212 807 7100

HEAVY METAL, 100 North Village Road, Suite 12, Rockville Center, NY 11570 (adult fantasy magazines and spin-off editions)

HUMANOIDS PUBLISHING, PO Box 931658, Hollywood, California CA 90093 (US-European editions)

IMAGE COMICS, 1071 North Batavia Street, Suite A, Orange, CA 92867 (adventure) (00)1 714 2880200

MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, 10th Floor, East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016 (adventure, humour and licensed) (00)1 212 5764000

NBM PUBLICATIONS, 185 Madison Avenue, Suite 1504, New York, NY 10016 (adult fantasy graphic novels and magazines)

ONI PRESS, 6336 South East Milwaukie Avenue, PMB 30, Portland, OR 97202 (adventure)

RADIO COMIX, 11765 West Avenue, PMB #117, San Antonio, TX 78216 (anthropomorphic manga) (00)1 210 3487195

SIRIUS ENTERTAINMENT, INC, PO Box 834, Stanhope, NJ 07802 (adult)

SLAVE LABOR GRAPHICS PUBLISHING, 577 South Market Street, San Jose, CA 95113 (black and white fantasy titles) (00)1 9718929

TOP SHELF PRODUCTIONS, PO Box 1282, Marietta, GA 30061-1282 (alternative and biographical titles) (00)1 770 4276395

TWOMORROWS PUBLISHING, 10407 Bedfordtown Drive, Raleigh, NC 27614 (comics feature magazines) tel: (00)1 919 4490344 fax: (00) 1 919 4490327

VIZ COMMUNICATIONS, PO Box 77010, San Francisco, CA 94107 (English translated manga)

WaRP GRAPHICS, 2600 South Road, Suite 44/242, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 (Elfquest and spin-offs)

United Kingdom

The following are major UK newsstand comics and graphic novel publishers. If calling from outside of the UK, you should drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe and Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

AP COMICS, Suite 3, 7 French Row, St Albans, Herts AL3 5DU (adventure)

COM.X, The Dickens Inn, Kirk Street, London WC1N 2DG (adventure titles) 020 7831 7777

DC THOMSON, 2 Albert Square, Dundee DD1 9QJ (humour and adventure comics, pocket books and annuals)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LTD, 30 Cleveland Street, London W1T 4JD (humour and adventure comics, pocket books and annuals) 020 7907 6000

EGMONT MAGAZINES LTD, 25-31 Tavistock Place, London WC1H 9SU (humour, licensed and pre-school titles) 020 7344 6400

HAMLYN BOOKS, 2-4 Heron Quays, London E14 4JB (graphic novels) 020 7531 8400

JOHN BROWN CITRUS PUBLISHING, The New Boathouse, 136-142 Bramley Road, London W10 6SR (albums) 020 7565 3000

KNOCKABOUT COMICS, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (humour and underground comix and graphic novels) 020 8969 2945

PANINI COMICS (UK), Panini House, Coach and Horses Passage, The Pantiles, Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN2 5UJ (humour and adventure comics, Marvel licensed titles) 01892 500100

REBELLION DEVELOPMENTS LTD, The Studio, Brewer Street, Oxford OX1 1QN (Judge Dredd The Megazine and 2000 AD) 01865 792201

THE REDAN COMPANY, Canon Court East, Abbey Lawn, Shrewsbury SY2 5DE (pre-school humour and licenced titles) 01743 364433

SAVOY BOOKS, 446 Wilmslow Road, Withington, Manchester M20 3BW (adult comics magazines, books and graphic novels) 0161 445 5771

TITAN ENTERTAINMENT GROUP LTD, Titan House, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 OUP (licensed graphic novels, books, magazines and comics) 020 7620 0200

France

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0033 becomes 011 33

ALBIN MICHEL, 22 rue Huyghens, 75014 Paris (albums) (0033) 1 42 79 10 00

CASTERMAN, 36 rue du Chemin Vert, 75011, Paris (albums and manga)

DARGAUD, 15-27 rue Moussorgski, 75018 Paris (albums and manga) tel: (0033) 1 53 26 32 32 fax: (0033) 1 53 26 32 00

DELCOURT, 54 rue d'Hauteville, 75010 Paris (albums and comics) tel: (0033) 1 56 03 92 20 fax: (0033) 1 56 03 92 30

FLUIDE GLACIAL, 33 avenue du Main, BP 187, 75755 Paris (comics and albums) (0033) 1 43 20 23 96

GLENAT, 31-33 rue Ernest Renan, 92130 Issy-Les-Moulineaux (albums and manga titles) tel: (0033) 1 41 46 11 41 fax: (0033) 1 41 46 11 13

J'AI LU, 84 rue de Grenelle, 75007 Paris (licenced Japanese manga) (0033) 1 44 39 34 70

LES HUMANOIDES ASSOCIES, 5 Passage Piver, 75011 Paris (albums) tel: (0033) 1 49 29 88 88 fax: (0033) 1 49 29 88 89

SEMIC FRANCE, 44316 Nantes Cedex 03 (licenced comics and albums) (0033) 2 51 86 14 14

Italy

The following are the country's major comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0039 becomes 011 39

SERGIO BONELLI EDITORE, via Buonarroti 38, 20145 Milano (black and white comics)

CULT COMICS, viale Emilio Po' 380, 41100 Modena (Image and Dark Horse licensed)

MAGIC PRESS, Zona industriale via Ragusa 18, 00040 Pavona, Roma (Vertigo and WildStorm licensed titles) (0039) 06 93020361

STAR COMICS, strada Selvette 1bis/1 Bosco (PG) (comics and black and white manga)

ASTORINA S.R.I., via Boccaccio 32, 20123 Milano (Diabolik original and reprint black and white)

KING COMICS, via Pinerolo 3, 00182 Roma (comics)

Spain

The following are the country's comics and album publishers. If phoning from the USA, the country code of 0034 becomes 011 34

NORMA EDITORAL, Fluvià 89, 08019 Barcelona (licensed DC and Dark Horse comics and albums) 0034 93 303 68 20

EDITORIAL PLANETA-DE AGOSTINI, SA, Aribau 185, 08021 Barcelona (licensed Dark Horse comics and albums)

TOUTAIN EDITOR, SA, Diagonal 325, E-08009 Barcelona (licensed Marvel, Dark Horse, Chaos!, Image and manga comics and albums) 0034 93 344 06 00

EDICIONES LA CÚPULA, Plaza de las Beatas 3, E-08003 Barcelona (adult comics and albums) 0034 32 682 8 05

Mail Order Specialists

Key to abbreviations used:

w/s	= wholesale available	CoBRA	= Comic Book Retailers' mail order protection scheme
dis	= bulk discount terms	cc	= major credit cards accepted
cat	= phone/write for catalogue	sae	= send stamped, addressed envelope with enquiry
s-cat	= sae for catalogue		
wants	= wants lists accepted		
s-wants	= sae with wants lists		

When telephoning from outside the UK, drop the first 0 and replace with: 01144 (USA); 0044 (mainland Europe & Eire); 001144 (Australasia).

Golden Age

Generally acknowledged as being published between 1938 and 1945, the first age of superhero comics, but herein designated to cover all pre-Silver Age American comics.

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

NEW **Goldust Comics**, 67 St John's Wood High St, London NW8 2NL (high grade, cat, wants, cc) 020 8341 5558

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Silver Age

*Accepted as starting in 1955 with DC's superhero rebirth through **Detective Comics** #225 (intro-ducing the Martian Manhunter) and **Showcase** #4 (introducing the Barry Allen Flash). Herein covering titles up to late 1960s.*

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

East Coast Comics UK, 28 Acton Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk NR33 7LG (high grade, s-want, cc, sae) 01502 578385 (day) 560727 (eve)

NEW **Goldust Comics**, 67 St John's Wood High St, London NW8 2NL (high grade, cat, wants, cc) 020 8341 5558

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Quicksilver Comics, PO Box 73, Ossett WF5 0YQ (s-cat, dis, wants, cc, CoBRA) 01924 270500 (fax: 270919)

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax 680686)

Post-Silver Age

Comics from 1970 to date: From Bronze Age-Marvel Age-Lead Age up to Platinum Age-Gimmick Age-Image Age. Historians will doubtless eventually decide on a name.

Mighty World of Comicana, 237 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2 (dis, cat, CoBRA, cc) 020 7836 5630

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse* PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Quality Comics, 345 Ditchling Rd, Brighton BN1 6JJ (CoBRA, cc)

Tarpaulin Books and Comics, 5 Oak Close, Thetford, Norfolk IP24 3EZ (wants, s-cat) 01842 820139

Hot Comics

Current or key titles, first issues or first appearances of major characters. Investment titles for speculators willing to gamble.

A Place in Space, 101 Church Street, Croydon, Surrey CR0 1RN (wants, cc, dis) 020 8686 2400

Comix-shop. co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

Advance Imports

US comics are not generally available in UK newsagents, except for some sea-freight shipped low-cover price DCs and Marvels, and can only be found through specialists in the rest of the world. The following companies offer air-shipped copies from all of the major US publishers.

Ace Comics, 63/64 High Street, Colchester, Essex (wants, cat, CoBRA, cc) 01206 561912

Avalon Comics, 143 Lavender Hill, London SW11 5QJ (cc, CoBRA) 020 7924 3609

Comix-shop.co.uk, 7a High Street, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 1JN (wants, cat, cc) 01628 777998

86th Floor Comics & Cards, 6 Shipley Common Lane, Ilkeston, Derbyshire DE7 8TR (dis, cat, cc) 0115 9443009

Forbidden Planet Mega-store, 179 Shaftesbury Avenue, London WC2H 8JR (s-cat cc) 020 7420 3666

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH 020 7636 1011

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse*, PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

Red Hot Comics, The Warehouse Block D Unit 8, Glenwood Business Park, Glenwood Place, Glasgow G45 9UH (CoBRA, w/s, dis, wants, cc) tel/fax: 0141 630 0049

Limited Editions

Many high-profile miniseries and one-shots are also available in limited, numbered and often autographed editions (s&n). New titles, to acquire copyright, can also appear in small print-run "ashcan" editions (ash).

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (CoBRA, cc, ash, s&n, cat) 020 8446 3464

Trading Cards

Several mail order dealers carry a range of non-sports cards and related peripherals (files, folders, sleeves).

Beyond Comics, 76 Harlescott Road, Nunhead, London SE15 3BZ (s-cat, s-wants, sae, CoBRA) tel/fax: 020 7564 4213

John McDonald: Non-Sport Trading Cards, 20 Alder Grove, Coatbridge, Lanarkshire ML5 3PT (cat, wants) tel/fax: 01236 433358

Old British Titles

The popularity of old British comics continues to increase as more dealers expand into this area. The following specialise in such titles.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Biz, PO Box 7041, London N12 9NF (wants, CoBRA, cc, cat) 020 8446 3464

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Weird Fantasy, 19 Decoy Road, Ormesby, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk NR29 3LG (s-cat, s-wants, annuals specialist)

Merchandise

Comics, film and TV-related t-shirts, posters, video games, badges, toys, action figures, etc.

Off World: The Sci-Fi Store, 142 Market Halls, Arndale Centre, Luton, Beds LU1 2TP. (specialists in Star Trek, Star Wars and sci-fi collectables) 01582 736256

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Original Art

With artists having their originals returned by publishers, an increasing number of pages are now being made available for collectors.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Silver Acre Comics, PO Box 114, Chester CH4 8WQ (s-wants, cc) 01244 680 048 (fax: 680686)

Peripherals

Acid-free protection for comics. Backing boards, protective bags, storage boxes, etc.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP 020 8768 0022

Just Comics, 65 Station Road, Warboys, Huntingdon, Cambs PE28 2TH (w/s only, CollectorLine™ distributor) 01487 824895 01487 824896

Planet Warehouse (FPI) *formerly Comics Warehouse*, PO Box 600, 8 Galliford Road, Maldon, Essex CM9 7XD (w/s, cat, cc, CoBRA) 01621 877244

General Fantasy

As well as comics old and new, some suppliers also provide catalogues of multi-media fantasy, covering TV, film, trading cards and toys.

Forbidden Planet Mail Order, 144 Southwark Street, London SE1 0UP (cat) 020 7803 1900 (fax: 7803 1901)

Sci-Fi Merchandise Direct (FPI) and **Gear for Games (FPI)** Maldon, Essex CM9 4XD (cat) 01621 877222

Manga Titles

English language translations of Japanese comics and US titles drawn in the Japanese style.

United Publications, 85 Croydon Road, Keston, Kent BR2 8HU (ind, back, cat, wants, cc) 020 8325 9507

Alternative & Biographical

The following carry an extensive range of biographical and slice-of-life comicbooks and graphic novels (Fantagraphics, Maus, Crumb, Pekar...)

Gosh! Strips by Mail, 39 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3PH (wants) 020 7636 1011

Knockabout Comics, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (w/s, s-cat, cc) 020 8969 2945 (fax: 8968 7614)

Page 45, 9 Market Street, Nottingham NG1 6HY 0115 9508045

Comics Auctions

Accepting lots from the general public, comics auctions provide an alternative way for collectors to sell their valuable comics. The following accept items for sale, as well as providing regular catalogues for mail order bids.

Comic Book Postal Auctions Ltd, 40-42 Osnaburgh Street, London NW1 3ND (cat) 020 7424 0007

Distributors

Anybody considering opening a comics shop or becoming a mail order dealer can obtain further information about the supply of titles from the following who bulk air import US and European comics and related items on a weekly basis.

The Book Palace, Jubilee House, Bedwardine Road, Crystal Palace, London SE19 3AP (graphic novels, art books, comics, remainders, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8768 0022

Diamond Comic Distributors, 2nd Floor, Warton House, 150 High Street, London E15 2NP (US and European comics, cards and related items) 020 8536 5730 (fax: 8536 5736)

Red Route Distribution, Unit 24, 10 Acklam Road, London W10 5QZ (US & European comics/ graphic novels, back-list specialists) 020 8960 5855

Turnaround Publisher Services, Unit 3, Olympia Trading Estate, Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6TZ (graphic novels, art books, film and TV, popular culture) 020 8829 3000

Mail Order Dealers:

CI's Mail Order Index is the industry's most cost-effective and highly-targeted way to reach a huge dedicated audience in excess of 40,000 readers every month. It costs only £4 ($6 US) per entry per issue to appear and is bookable in advance as a six-issue series. Send pre-payment of £24/$36 (plus £4.20 VAT for UK advertisers) per category with your details to:

Comics International, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

Cheques and international money orders should be made payable to Comics International. Alternatively, payment can be made by credit card, fax: 0(11 44) 1273 566 333 or e-mail: comicsinternational@yahoo.co.uk

The letters **(FPI)** after entries indicates that the company is part of **Forbidden Planet International Ltd**

Classified

Advertising terms and conditions

Whether for publication or not, all advertisements must be accompanied by full name, home address and daytime phone number of advertiser.

• All private classified Wants or Announcements ads (comics or card related items only) are free of charge. Maximum 50 words, they will be printed at the publisher's discretion when space permits. *(Only one advertisement can be submitted per letter/per issue so everybody gets a chance to fit in!)*

• FOR SALE ads (and dealer wants/announcements) are charged:
(i) General announcements: Stating no issue numbers, prices or titles. Per 50 words (or part thereof) ..... £5.00 ($7.50 US)
(ii) List ads: (including specific titles, issues and/or prices. Minimum charge, per 100 words (or part thereof) ..... £10.00 ($15.00 US)

Payment (to Comics International) must accompany advertising copy.

CI Classified, 345 Ditchling Road, Brighton BN1 6JJ

For Sale

Collection for sale: 306 US comics. Atlas, Quality, DC, Charlton, etc from the 1940s to the 1970s. 167 UK1/- and 6d reprints. 18 UK annuals - all 1950s to 1970s, mainly westerns, crime and horror. Write for your free list to Paul H.B. Rose, 16 The Loft, King's Terrace, Emsworth, Hampshire PO10 7AA.

Comics collection for sale: **Action**, **Avengers**, **Daredevil**, **Marvel Two-in-One**, **Spider-Man**, **Thor** and **X-Men**. 1970s to present. Mylite protected. Over 1000 issues. E-mail for list: Jonathan.Seymour@btclick.com or phone 01249 460818.

For sale: cheap comics! Marvel, DC, indies and British comics at below guide prices. Full list includes lots of information on individual issues. Also, a range of books, comics, annuals and videos featuring a popular TV time lord. Interested? Send an sae (maximum A5) to Kieron Mullens, 47 Luckwell Road, Ashton, Bristol BS3 3ES.

Over 20,000 US and UK comics for sale: Early to late issues covering every title. American titles include **X-Men**, **Spider-Man**, **Daredevil**, **Superman**, **Batman**, **Detective**, **Avengers**, etc. British titles include **Blake's Seven**, **Dr Who**, **Conan**, **Alien**, **Mad**, **X-Files**, **Red Dwarf**, **Carnage**, **Star Wars**, **Terminator**, etc. Also, **Classics Illustrated**, tabloid editions, digests, **Marvel Masterworks**, signed editions, horror magazines, sci-fi, annuals, trading card sets, videos, pogs, Tin Tin books and much more! No lists, so write or phone with wants. John Clark, 35 Denny Avenue, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 1NT. Tel: 01992 716961 or 07941 572672.

Wanted

Advertisers are reminded that Wanted ads must be no longer than 50 words (including address), and only single insertion private advertisements can be published free of charge.

Wanted: **Superman**, **Superboy** and **Batman** British annuals from the 1950s and 1960s; **Jack and Jill: All Colour Giftbook** (1953); **T.V. Comic** weeklies and specials from the 1960s and 1970s; **Archie**: 80-Page Giants only. Gold Key: Supercar, Fireball, XL5, H.R. Pufnstuf and Banana Splits; US detective and horror pulps; UK Boardman, Badger and Scion paperbacks. Write to John Balfour, Westerstraat 67-3, Amsterdam, Holland, 1015 LW.

Announcements

Fanzine and small press titles must not be offered for sale before being printed. To verify publication, a sample copy must be sent in along with the advertising copy (50 words max). Single bookings only, so everybody gets a chance!

With regards to *Q&A* #168, and Stephen McGowan's question about *The Freebies* by Jamie Hewlett: I have the copies of **The Face** you are looking for – and I'm willing to sell them to you. Please write to me (apologies. I don't have a computer): Julian Bignell, 2 Chestnut Avenue, Stonehouse GL10 2HW.

Volume 2 of the critically acclaimed **Devilchild** small press graphic novel series is released in late May and we're looking for talented, quick and dependable artists to work on short five- to six-page strips. Interested? Send samples to Andrew Winter, 32 Rutland Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2XH.

Pest Control 5: following the gruesome events of last issue, we can finally reveal *The Life and Times of Penny Dreadful*. You really don't want to miss this one! Send £1 to Grant Springford, 2 Cawston Court, Highland Road, Bromley BR1 4AF. Suggested for mature readers.

Remember **2000 AD**'s own Bionic Man, MACH 1? Remember "the sons and daughters of the Justic Society", otherwise known as Infinity Inc? **Comics Retrospective** 5, on sale now, pays tribute to these legendary heroes. Er... and also to MACH 1. £1.20 from Tony Ingram, 3 Lower Harlings, Shotley Gate, Ipswich, Suffolk IP9 1QE.

Writers and artists wanted! **Redeye** 1 was a smash success at London's Comic Festival! Issue 2 will be available from all good comics shops in May 2004. And YOU need to be in it! If you're a UK self-publisher or creator in need of exposure, contact Barry Renshaw asap at editor@enginecomics.co.uk or at Redeye, 8 Avril Close, Reddish, Stockport SK5 6XH before March 1st.

New graphic novel **Angel of the Woods** – a supernatural story of the Vertigo type. Highly praised by professionals and recommended as 'Certified cool' by Diamond. 84 black and white pages, illustrated in a classical European art style. Available from Diamond or Red Route Distribution (February catalogue, **Previews** page 218). Direct from the publishers for £5.99 UK/$8.99 US(p&p £1/$2). Sean Michael Wilson,11A Montpelier Rise, London NW11 9SS. Or e-mail: sean@boychild productions.co.uk or www.boychildproductions.co.uk

Bionic Benny issue 2... again! Bionic Comcis continues its policy of retreading old ground! Follow the conclusion of Bionic Benny's first epic adventure. Send two first class stamps to 94 Tippett Rise, Reading RG2 0DZ. And don't forget – **Bionic Benny** issue 1 is still available for the same great price!

Sgt Mike Battle: The Greatest American Hero! 4. Relive the adventure from 1987 when Sgt Mike Battle led Battle Force against the terrorist organisation Panda! Only £1 (plus p&p) for 40 pages of black and white fun from Graham Pearce, c/o 42 Talbot Road, Preston PR1 9QX. Visit us at: www.sgtmikebattle.com

In Dublin City (a story in rhyme told in pictures by Gerry Hunt). Issues 1 and 2 of this professionally printed, 36-page, A4, colour card-covered title now available. "Astounding" – Dez Skinn, **Comics International**. £5 the pair with all proceeds donated to The Simon Community. Order from Robert Curley, Atomic Diner, 51 Tyrconnell Park, Inchicore, Dublin 8, Ireland.

UK Web & Mini Comix Thing 2004: £4 on the day. Spend the day with the mini and web comix artists of today, buy mini comix and have your portfolio critiqued by professional artists. 20th March, The Octagon, Stepney, London. Visit our website for further information: www.ukwebcomixthing.co.uk

From the Tomb 11 presents an Al Feldstein cover, his horror work and early humour books. Enter those Houses of Horror from the 1950s comics, Morbius in Vampire Tales, The Spectre, and the UK editions of Black Magic analysed and indexed. £3.95 from Soaring Penguin, 2 Hambledon Road, London SW18 5UB.

Black Boar Press Sketchbook #1, limited to 80 signed and numbered copies. Sketches, and rarely seen art by David Hitchcock, featuring **Springheeled Jack**, **Whitechapel Freak**, **Spirit of the Highwayman** and more. A5, 30+ pages. £3.50 (including postage & packing) cheques to D. Hitchcock, Gunhills Farm, Gunhills Lane, Windley, Derbyshire DE56 2LR.

ANROFuture Trends new home-page is up! This time it's true! Is it worth the wait? Visit www.alternaterealities.co.uk

The O Men 21: The Eagle Award-nominated super-soap continues! The spotlight falls on mortal enemies Doctor O and Anathema as major secrets are revealed! Send £1 to Martin, 19a Trevelyan Road, Tooting, London SW17 9LS. Collections of the early **O Men** issues are also now available! Check out the website: www.theomen.free-online.co.uk

Comic Societies

Join The Eagle Society, dedicated to the memory of Britain's National Strip Cartoon Weekly – The Eagle 1950-1969. For just £18 per year (cheques should be made payable to The Eagle Society) members receive our quarterly journal **Eagle Times**, as well as the chance to attend social gatherings and meet original Eagle contributors. Write to the membership secretary: Keith Howard, 25a Station Road, Harrow, Middlesex HA1 2UA. Or e-mail: rsheaf@npg.org.uk

Comics Creators Guild: The Future of Comics in our Hands. Industry veterans and aspiring professionals. Join the largest comics organisation in Europe. Monthly meetings, newsletter, Comics Forum, exclusive publications, free legal advice, special discounts and more. For further information please contact: Comics Creators Guild, 22 St James Mansions, West End Lane, West Hampstead, London NW6 2AA. www.comicscreators.org.uk

BUY OR SELL OR EVEN TRADE

It's been tried and tested for over 10 years and it's still going strong...

Comics International's *Classified* section has turned more than one £5 "For Sale" advertiser into a big-time full page dealer.

One of the first-read sections of the magazine for both dealers and fans, *Classified* offers you the opportunity to add a part time job to boost your finances.

Most comic fans have unwanted titles taking up valuable space...

... A loft which is in need of clearing.

... A spare room which is no longer spare.

... A garage which is pining for a car.

Classified can help you not only clear that space, but earn you money while doing so. More than 4,500 such ads have been placed on this page, with regular dealers coming back each issue.

It costs only £5 to place a 50-word For Sale general announcement. Or £10 for a 100-word list ad, detailing issues and prices. Ads can appear within a week of you sending them...

So, what are you waiting for? Everybody else to jump in first?

... It's down to you!

Comic & Card Events

FREE ADMISSION TO ALL SHOWS
DOORS OPEN 12 NOON

COMICBOOK MARKETPLACE

2004 SUNDAY APRIL 7

FOR AMERICAN COMICBOOKS AND CULT COLLECTABLES

CAMDEN CENTRE
Bidborough St, London WC1

The Comicbook Marketplace is held five times a year at the Camden Centre and is just a few minutes walk from Euston, Kings Cross and St. Pancras stations.
There are more than ninety tables with over 1,000,000 comicbooks, magazines and trading cards on sale, including S.F., Fantasy, Film and T.V. related items from Britain's top dealers.

OVER 90 DEALERS TABLES!

HOW TO GET THERE. BUS: 10, 17, 30, 45, 46, 63, 73, 91, 214, or 259 to Kings Cross/Camden Town Hall. UNDERGROUND: Circle, Metropolitan, Piccadilly or Victoria Line to Kings Cross. BRITISH RAIL: Euston, Kings Cross and St. Pancras are within walking distance of the venue.

FUTURE DATE: 4TH JULY 2004

OVER 160 TABLES

THE NATIONAL COLLECTORS MARKETPLACE

2004 SUNDAY MAY 2

ROYAL NATIONAL HOTEL
BEDFORD WAY
LONDON WC1

The National, with 160 tables is the largest regular marketplace for comicbook and trading card collectors in the U.K. You will also find a whole range of related materials including Sci-fi, Fantasy, Film, TV and Toys fromleading British & international dealers.

2000 AD
ACTION FIGURES
ANIME
BABYLON 5
BRITISH COMICS
BUFFY
COMIC BOOK SUPPLIES
GAMING CARDS
GOLDEN AGE COMICS
LATEST IMPORT COMICS
NON-SPORTS CARDS
ORIGINAL ARTWORK
POKEMON
SILVER AGE COMICS
SPORTS CARDS
SCI FI/FANTASY
STAR TREK
STAR WARS
TOYS
TRADING CARD SUPPLIES
VIDEOS

HOW TO GET THERE. BUS: 68, 91, 168 or 188 to Woburn Place. UNDERGROUND: Piccadilly Line to Russell Square. NATIONAL RAIL: Euston and Kings Cross are within walking distance of the venue.

FUTURE DATE: 6TH JUNE 2004

CARD MART

2004 SUNDAY JULY 11

FOR SPORTS, NON-SPORTS AND COLLECTABLE GAMING CARDS

THE NATION'S TOP TRADING CARD EVENT

CAMDEN CENTRE, Bidborough St, London WC1

Dealers: for table availability phone 020 747 66 873

www.comicmart.co.uk

Events

A summary of all the events advertised this issue

March

27/3 Glasgow: Scottish Comics, Card & Collectables Fair, James Moir Hall (Mitchell Theatre) Granville Street ..... (p33)
27/3 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p48)

April

3/4 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p48)
7/4 London: Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street [NOTE: not at The Royal National Hotel as previously listed] ..... (p58)
10/4 Nottingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p48)
16/4 London: Comix: The Underground Revolution launch and panel at Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall ..... (p24)
17-18/4 Birmingham: Memorabilia '04, Birmingham NEC ..... (p7)
24/4 Sheffield: Comic Mart & Card Show, The Royal Society for the Blind, Main Hall, Mappin Street (off West Street) ..... (p48)

May

1/5 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p48)
2/5 London: The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p58)
8/5 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p48)
16/5 London: The London ABCD Show, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p33)
22/5 Newcastle: Comic Mart & Card Show, University of Northumbria, Students' Union Ballroom, Sandyford Road ..... (p48)
29/5 Birmingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, The Clarendon Suites, Hagley Road, Birmingham ..... (p48)
29-30/5 Bristol: Comic Festival 2004 ..... (p4)

June

6/6 London: The National Collectors' Marketplace, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p58)
19/6 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p48)
20/6 Liverpool: Comic Mart & Card Show, Gladstone Hotel, Lord Nelson Street, Liverpool ..... (p48)
22/6 Nottingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, Victoria Leisure Centre, Gedling Street, Nottingham ..... (p48)

July

3/7 Leeds: Comic Mart & Card Show, Leeds Metropolitan University, Brunswick Hall, Merrion Way, Leeds ..... (p48)
4/7 London: Comicbook Marketplace, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street. (p58)
11/7 London: Card Mart, Camden Centre, Bidborough Street ..... (p58)
17/7 Birmingham: Comic Mart & Card Show, The Clarendon Suites, Hagley Road, Birmingham ..... (p48)
31/7 Sheffield: Comic Mart & Card Show, The Royal Society for the Blind, Main Hall, Mappin Street (off West Street) ..... (p48)

August

7/8 Manchester: Comic Mart & Card Show, Sachas Hotel, Tib Street, Piccadilly, Manchester ..... (p48)
14-15/8 Birmingham: Memorabilia '04, Birmingham NEC ..... (p7)

September

19/9 London: The London ABCD Show, The Royal National Hotel, Bedford Way ..... (p33)

Please note: the above listing of UK comics, trading card and related events is free to Comics International display advertisers only.

www.incognitocomics.co.uk

INCOGNITO

You can also order from our FREE catalogue by e-mail, phone, fax or snail mail!

e: sales@incognitocomics.demon.co.uk

Incognito Comic Shop
1-2 The Friars, Canterbury,
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IN STORES APRIL 2004
MARVEL SELECT™
Straight from the cover of the classic Amazing Spider-Man™ #39, The Green Goblin™ learns the identity of his arch-emesis!
Includes removable pumpkin bomb andbag, Goblin Glider™ with display stand andtied-up Peter Parker.
Green Goblin™
SCULPTED BY SAM GREENWELL
ONLY AVAILABLE IN SPECIALTY STORES!

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